Apache Land: Indigenous Colonialism on North America's Borderlands

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ABSTRACTS

Dieser Aufsatz hinterfragt die Idee, dass es ein europäisches Monopol auf den Kolonialismus gibt, indem er die „Kolonialität" und das Siedlungsgeschehen im nordamerikanischen Grenzland zwischen Apachen, Komantschen und Spaniern im 18. Jahrhundert thematisiert. Im Zentrum steht die Idee eines Apachenlandes als eines sich verschiebenden und umkämpften kolonialen Gebiets, eines Mosaiks vielfältiger kolonialer Bestrebungen, verwickelter Allianzen und Feindschaften. Apachen, Komantschen und Spanier waren an Expansionsprojekten, Akten der Ausgrenzung und Vernichtung, Umsiedlung und Assimilation beteiligt. Die Apachen selbst waren Expansionisten; im Zusammenspiel eigener Aktionen und rivalisierender Expansionsbestrebungen erweiterten sie ihre Stammgebiete, schrumpften und zerbrachen diese. Das Land der Apachen war ein Raum, der durch koloniale Projekte immerfort neu gestaltet wurde, die nicht etwa von Euroamerikanern diktiert oder dominiert wurden.

Challenging the idea of colonialism as a European monopoly, this article uses a colonial and settler-colonial lens to frame a discussion of eighteenth-century North American borderland histories involving Apaches, Comanches and the Spanish. It centres on the idea of a shifting and contested colonial zone – Apache land – as a mosaic of competing colonial projects and intricate networks of friendship and enmity. In this zone, the Apaches, Comanches and the Spanish engaged in expansionist projects and invidious distinction, as well as elimination, replacement and assimilation. The Apaches were expansionists whose homelands enlarged, contracted and fragmented over time as a result of rival expansionist projects and the Apache's own designs. Consequently, Apache land was a space being constantly remade by colonial projects that were not dictated or dominated by Euro-Americans.

Comparativ | Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung 30 (2020) Heft 3 / 4, S. 339–352.
DOI: 10.26014/j.comp.2020.03-04.10

A 1759 map of North America's borderlands marks a sizable area along the Rio Grande in New Mexico and Texas as "Terra Apachorum" – "Apache land". West of this "Terra Apachorum" the map places "Apacheria" and "Apachi di Xila", denoting present-day Arizona-New Mexico border areas, while toward the northeast, beyond Spanish Santa Fe, New Mexico, there is in this map the territory of "Apachi Vaqueros".[1] Designating Apache land as a large, yet fragmented swath of territory suggests three key facets of Apache history often overlooked by historians. First, the Apaches were expansionists, whose homelands enlarged, contracted and fractured over time, as a result of rival expansionist projects and Apache designs. At its maximal extent, Apache land stretched from north of the Platte River on the Great Plains (present-day Nebraska) to the deserts and mountains of Sonora and Coahuila in the south, and from present-day Arizona in the west deep into Texas in the east. Second, Apache land was a mosaic of plural sovereignty, a contact zone characterized by intricate networks of friendship and enmity between vibrant indigenous populations and Euro-Americans. Third, Apache land was a space that was constantly remade by colonial projects that were not dictated or dominated by Euro-Americans. In fact, Apache land was very much a setting for indigenous colonialism.

Traditionally, historians writing on white-indigenous relations at the heart of the North American continent have positioned these histories in relation to the master narrative of Euro-American expansion, taking as their coordinates the northern realm of New Spain's imperial conquest or the westward expansion of the United States. From this perspective, indigenous powers have often occupied the margins of history. Typecast as wild or noble savages, Apaches, Comanches and many other indigenous polities have been approached as obstacles the white colonizers needed to face and conquer, or "pacify". In recent years, however, revisionist scholars such as Juliana Barr, Ned Blackhawk, Brian Delay, Pekka Hämäläinen and Karl Jacoby have examined different, fluid and liminal, shapes and spaces of violence that intersected with the paradigm of Euro-American imperial rivalries or US expansion, but did not necessarily confine themselves to either master narrative. They have taken indigenous power seriously, looking at imperial rivalries and power relations from indigenous viewpoints, in the process making colonization a dialectical process with strong indigenous activity. They have shown that indigenous power could even eclipse European colonization, as Hämäläinen did when he made a case for the Comanches' building a hegemonic empire on the Southern Plains in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[2]

1 J. B. Homann / E. Homann, Regni Mexicani seu Novæ Hispaniæ, Floridæ, Novæ Angliæ, Carolinæ, Virginiæ, et Pennsylvaniæ, nec non insvlarvm archipelagi Mexicani in America septentrionali. [Noribergæ Homann Erben, 1759], https://www.loc.gov/item/74690812/ (accessed 13 April 2020).

2 J. Barr, Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands, Chapel Hill 2007; N. Blackhawk, Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West, Cambridge 2006; B. DeLay, War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War, New Haven 2008; P. Hämäläinen, The Comanche Empire, New Haven 2008; K. Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History, New York 2008.

Still, few writers before this article have explicitly framed and interpreted the intersecting and unstable relations in the borderlands by centring the idea of a shifting and contested colonial zone – Apache land – and by placing the Apaches at the centre of analysis, stressing indigenous colonialism. What does it mean, then, to write about indigenous colonialism? Typically, as historical processes and as analytical tools, colonialism – as well as settler colonialism – is connected nearly exclusively with the globe-spanning expansions of European powers and their offspring states during the modern era. Yet, this approach is problematic, as it makes Europe exceptional, enabling it to monopolize colonialism, instead of seeing colonialism as a nearly universal phenomenon in human history. While it comes in many shapes and sizes, at its core colonialism involves an expansionist unit, or in this case three: Apaches, Comanches and Spanish. Colonialism, in general, and also on Apache land comprised conquest and control of other peoples' land and lives – involving the rule of difference and invidious distinction based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion or some other marker of differentiation. On Apache land, invidious distinction was practised by all parties: Comanches and Apaches saw the Spanish as inferior people, while the Spanish divided the natives into *barbaros* (wild) or peaceful people, using lifestyle and religion as measurements. And all parties enslaved, but also assimilated members of the other groups, blurring the line between us and them while creating multi-ethnic colonial communities.[3] Colonialism habitually carries a marked tension between assimilation and incorporation of subject peoples, on the one hand, and their othering, differentiation, expulsion and extermination, on the other.[4] Apache land too was a fluid colonial world grounded on othering and assimilation, as well as replacement and elimination.

As a distinct form of colonialism, settler colonialism is – as its key theorist, the anthropologist Patrick Wolfe, argues – preoccupied with replacement and access to territory, the land itself. It includes conquest, long-range migration, permanent settlement (or at least the intent to do so), the elimination and substitution of natives and the reproduction of one's own society on what used to be other people's lands. While Wolfe maintains that settler colonialism introduces "a zero-sum contest over land", and is characterized by a "logic of elimination", a sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the natives, he emphasizes that "settlers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event" or a series of isolated events.[5] Yet settler colonialism often seems less mechanical than Wolfe sug-

3 The Spanish social system divided people by *casta*, which equated social class to skin colour, with darker skin attached to manual labour and slavery, and whiter skin linked to honour and wealth. The main terms to describe ancestry, and thus social status, were *español* (Spanish), *indio* (Indian), *mestizo* (mixed Spanish-Indian), *mulatto* (Spanish-Black), *zambo* (Indian-Black), *coyote* (dark-skinned mestizo) and *castizo* (light-skinned mestizo) (R.A. Gutierrez, When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846, Stanford, 1991; J. F. Brooks, Captives and Cousins; Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands, Chapel Hill 2002).

4 My definition of colonialism adopts notions from P. Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, Princeton 1993; A. Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism, New York 1998; N. Thomas, Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government, Cambridge 1994.

5 P. Wolfe, Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race, in: American Historical Review 106 (2001),

gests and it certainly can be overturned like any other historical form of rule (as shown by the expulsion of settlers from French Algeria, for example). Furthermore, Wolfe's explanation not only indicates that the American West remains settler colonial today, but foregrounds white Anglo expansion as the principal motor of settler colonialism. The latter represents a very common belief, since settler colonialism is usually associated with, to use historian James Belich's wording, "the rise of the Anglo world" during the long nineteenth century, the making of the American West and the "British Wests" principally in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Unquestionably, this constitutes the standard interpretation of settler colonialism.[6]

However, it might be helpful to think of alternate readings that question and complicate the racial and temporal coordinates of settler colonialism in North America and also render the distinction between settler colonialism and other forms of colonialism less self-evident, making things more conjectural, intersectional and layered than Wolfe's staple definition of the concept. Recent literature has already identified settler colonialism in numerous places outside the Anglo world, including Japanese Hokkaido and Korea, Chinese Manchuria and Taiwan, Hawaii (subject to both American and Asian settler colonialism), French Algeria, many Latin American countries, Portuguese Mozambique, Russian Caucasus and Siberia, German Southwest Africa and the German East (German-Polish borderlands). In short, settler colonialism as a historical process seems integral to the making of an integrated and interlinked global order of empires.

But while scholars are beginning to recognize that settler colonialism can be employed to study non-white expansionists (at least Japan and China, so far), the question whether there historically could have existed indigenous settler colonialism or whether it makes sense to rethink indigenous expansionisms through the settler-colonial lens has not so far interested scholars. Still, by looking at Apache land in the eighteenth century we can detect efforts to substitute the previous residents, attempts to capture terrestrial spaces with the intention of making them one's own and plans to eliminate, through violence and assimilation, the previous residents. Even if Apache land was not invariably settler colonial, it would seem to be inherently colonial, subject to conquest, exploitation of labour and resources and invidious distinction, as Apaches, Comanches and the Spanish engaged in differentiation and the imposition of their form of rule over subject peoples. Perhaps looking at North America's indigenous powers through a settler-colonial lens, or as any kind of colonialism, could be seen as anachronistic, insensitive or even racist. But if we, as scholars, are going to take indigenous powers seriously, if we are to place indigenous historical actors on the same analytical field as non-indigenous expansionists, we need to be able to also ask these kind of questions pertaining to histories of conquest. We need to link indigenous groups to the global orders that empires created, and not only as objects, or victims, of colonialism, but as active participants, contesting and

esp. p. 868; P. Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native, in: Journal of Genocide Research 8 (2006), esp. p. 388.

6 J. Belich, Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, Oxford 2011.

engaging in colonialism. Otherwise we risk continued indigenous marginalisation from global colonial histories.

This essay uses the colonial and settler-colonial lens to highlight episodes of borderland histories, involving Apaches, Comanches and the Spanish as the principal cast. More precisely, it provides two snapshots of the shifting contours of power in Apache land. First, it zooms in on Texas in the mid-1700s, discussing how the Lipan Apaches faced colonial replacement and substitution, destruction and diaspora when caught between two expansionist empires. The Lipans were squeezed in from the north by the explosively expansionist Comanches, in the process of cementing their Plains empire grounded on a new lifestyle of equestrian buffalo hunting and horse pastoralism, and the Spanish from the south, who had made more tentative advances into Texas. Driven off their lands, the Lipans were also taken as slaves by both the Comanches and the Spanish, while also being subjected to conversion to Christianity by the Spanish. The second snapshot shows different Apache groups, mainly Mescaleros and Chiricahuas, courted by the Spanish in the 1780s to settle down in reservations located in the immediate proximity of Spanish *presidios* (military forts) throughout northern Sonora and Nueva Vizcaya. Here the question is primarily of Apache efforts to build an expansive raiding economy exploiting the Spanish settlements and of Spanish endeavours to eliminate the Apaches as competition through assimilation, of turning free raiders into tame, sedentary people under Spanish rule, and via deportation of Apaches as slaves throughout the Spanish American empire. Narrating the colonial implications of this brand of the civilizing mission and enslavement, tools in the arsenal of colonizers worldwide, the focus is on the disparity between Spanish and Apache colonial aims and on the gap between colonial policies and realities.

1. Colonization and Substitution on the Southern Plains

Several groups of anxious and hurried Lipan Apaches arrived from the north to the newly established San Saba mission in Texas. Most of the Apaches just stopped for the night and then headed south, wanting to get as far away as possible from the Comanche tide heading their way. Meanwhile, at San Saba rumours circulated of a massive Comanche army preparing to attack the mission. At dawn on 16 March 1758, an estimated two thousand Comanches, and their indigenous allies, including Tonkawas and Caddos, besieged the mission. Then they attacked. Pillaging the mission and its herd, and burning the buildings down, the Comanches put on a fierce demonstration of their power. Aggressive shouting, gun-firing, the thundering of hooves, coupled with fierce-looking war dresses made for a striking spectacle. In awe at the display unfolding before his eyes, Fray Miguel de Molina related how "I was filled with amazement and fear when I saw nothing but Indians on every hand". Their painted faces were "adorned with pelts, tails of wild beasts […] [and] deer horns". Finding no Apaches at San Saba, the Comanches did discover plenty of evidence of the Apache-Spanish alliance. Eager to dissolve this alliance – which was a potential impediment to their expansion – the Comanches still killed only

eight people at San Saba, indicating that displaying their power and instilling fear across this section of Apache land poised for conquest was their primary goal.[7]

The sacking of San Saba reflected the level of confidence and assertiveness the Comanches had reached after a half-century of colonial expansion on the Southern Plains, a process during which these semi-sedentary mountain dwellers had reinvented themselves as mounted buffalo hunters and horse pastoralists. While the Comanches, as Pekka Hämäläinen claims, did not establish settler colonies or engage in direct power over subject peoples, they did turn the flow of Spanish colonial northward advancement (from Mexico City) on its head.[8] And they methodologically conquered vast sections of Apache land from the Arkansas River to the Rio Grande, making much of the land their own and crushing and supplanting several Apache groups in the process. It was this colonial dislocation that spread from the Plains that had made many Apache groups seek alliances with the Spanish in New Mexico and Texas.

In hindsight, the Apache-Comanche conflict looks predictable. It involved two powerful groups inclined toward expansion, who envisioned new ways of life at the expense of other peoples by controlling and utilizing the massive open grasslands of the Southern Plains. There is little doubt that their colonial clash was about the land: who controlled the water and the grasses, and who had access to trade networks spanning all of the edges of the Plains. Moreover, as in more classic cases of settler colonialism the parties involved did not see that there existed enough of land to share as the Comanche-Apache wars took on some of the characteristics of Wolfe's zero-sum contest over land.

The Apache vision for life on the Plains was economic diversification. They expanded eastward, attempted equestrianism and hunted bison. Yet, unlike the Comanches, they also irrigated fields of maize, beans, squash and other food items along the river valleys of the Plains. This bound them to certain locales, where they set up villages and built houses, for the better part of the year. One of the Apache villages that the Spanish knew well was El Cuartelejo, some 330 miles northeast of Santa Fe (the Spanish centre in New Mexico) occupying the high plains of modern-day western Kansas. There, the Apaches exploited the farming knowledge of Pueblo refugees, who had escaped New Mexico after the 1680 revolt, which temporarily threw the Spanish out. Furthermore, the Apaches not only fought, but ranked other peoples, enslaving some and assimilating others. In the early 1700s, Lipans and Mescaleros incorporated the Jumanos, a once powerful native group in Texas. Further north, the Apaches pushed the Pawnees east along the Platte River area, taking and selling Pawnee slaves to the Spanish in New Mexico, and kept the Wichitas at bay in the Red River region.[9]

7 Quoted in: L. Simpson / P. Nathan (eds.), The San Saba Papers: A Documentary Account of the Founding and Destruction of San Saba Mission, Dallas 2000, p. 74, 85; Barr, Peace Came, pp. 180–184.

8 Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, pp. 4–5.

9 The Diary of Juan de Ulibarri to El Cuartelejo, 1706, in: A. Thomas (ed.), After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico 1696–1727, Norman 1935, pp. 59–76. On the Apaches' absorbing of the Jumanos, see G. Andersson, The Indian Southwest, 1580–1830: Ethnogenesis and Reinvention, Norman 1999, p. 114.

While the Apaches on the Plains never fully embraced equestrianism, which handicapped their mobility, the Comanches certainly did. An assortment of hunter-gatherers from the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin, the Comanches moved to the Southern Plains remaking themselves in the process, adopting and perfecting a mounted way of life that led them to carve out an empire at the expense of the Apaches and the Spanish. The Comanches saw in the Southern Plains grasslands a perfect environment for the horses they had stolen and traded from the Spanish in New Mexico. Their herds increased rapidly, allowing for a more efficient way of hunting and the utilisation of the one seemingly abundant natural resource on the Plains, the bison. Yet the Comanches needed space for their imperial vision. Enlarging horse herds, raised for both domestic use and as trade exports, required access to the sparse water and grass on the Plains. These same rich river valleys were also crucial for the Apaches' fields and for their much smaller horse herds. Comanches also recognized the value of wide trade and alliance networks between northern New Spain and French Louisiana. They acquired weapons from the French, gained access to carbohydrates via the New Mexico trade (a bison diet was heavy in protein) without having to farm themselves. While they also incorporated subject peoples as kin and slaves, the Comanches became the preeminent suppliers of captives, selling hundreds of Apaches as slaves to the Spanish. They also made alliances with the Utes to their west and the Tonkawas, Taovays and others to their east, using this combined force against the Apaches. Their population increased, they could mount efficient cavalry attacks and they could move fast, so that the enemy was unable to find or catch them. With the Comanches' full-blown mobile colonization coming their way, the Apaches were short of horses, weapons and allies, as well as being bound to their fields and villages, and thus easier to find. While their semi-sedentary life made the Apaches vulnerable to cavalry attacks, the fragmentary nature of Apache society also made organizing resistance less effective.[10]

Between the 1710s and 1760s, the Comanches' all-out colonization project wrested control of massive amounts of Apache land and eliminated the Apaches – killing, enslaving and supplanting them. These wars were about the land and its resources, and who would control both of these. The first colonial war zone was the upper Arkansas River basin in the 1710s and 1720s, then the Llano Estacado in the 1730s and 1750s, followed by the takeover of sections of western and southern Texas in the 1750s and early 1760s. Besides the Comanches, the French, allied to the Pawnees, were present on the eastern fringes of the Plains to take advantage of Apache weakness. Typically, the fully mounted Comanches advanced at a frightening pace, causing devastating havoc among the Apaches and forcing the survivors to abandon their homelands. In the north, the game looked set already in 1719, with thousands of Apaches on the run. For example, the Jicarilla Apaches retreated from the Plains to northern New Mexico, repeatedly looking, often

10 Diary of the Campaign of Governor Valverde, in: A. Thomas (ed.), After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico 1696–1727, Norman 1935, esp. pp. 130–133; Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, pp. 23–32; W. Wedel, Central Plains Prehistory, Lincoln 1986, pp. 135–151.

in vain, for protection from the Spanish. They pleaded for a mission, even pledging themselves vassals of Spain in 1723. In 1724, the Comanches sacked La Jicarilla, in the present-day Texas Panhandle. This cluster of Apache villages, teeming with refugees from the Plains Apache groups, was the site of a massive, desperate, nine-day-long battle. By 1726, the Jicarillas had completely abandoned their plains homes, settling in the vicinity of Pecos and Taos pueblos in New Mexico and subjecting themselves to Spanish rule. Other Apache peoples were also on the run. The Palomas, one of the easternmost Apache clusters, who possibly resided north of the Platte River in the Sand Hills of present-day Nebraska, retreated to join the Cuartelejo Apaches. The Palomas had lost their lands for good, as the Cuartelejos soon would.[11] What appears to be the last mention in the (Spanish) historical record of El Cuartelejo as Apache land comes from 1727.[12] After that, it was part of the Comanche empire.

Comanche aggression had reduced Apache life to a misery of horror and poverty. The physical and mental blow was devastating. Families were torn apart as Comanches captured Apache women and children (and some men), assimilating some of them and selling others into slavery. The latter ended up in Spanish homes, silver mines in the interior, French Louisiana or even Cuba.[13] Those captives who were lucky enough were given the privilege of becoming Comanches, renouncing their former identities and adopting the language and customs of their colonizers. Numerous Apaches faced merciless death at Comanche hands, while thousands of exiled Apaches endured a desperate diaspora, forfeiting their lands and seeking refuge among Apache kin and the Spanish. The old and the weak could not escape and warriors who survived were humiliated by their ordeals and loss, at being unable to defend their loved ones and their own lands. By the 1760s, the bulk of Apache land had been lost. The Spanish were also in dire straits.

In the 1700s, Spain's imperial dreams and efforts throughout its "New World" empire met their match in Indigenous powers ranging from the Araucanians in the south to the Comanches and Apaches in the north.[14] Indigenous powers stopped the Spanish advance, refused to be incorporated into the empire and adopted and invented practices of violence – including lightning raids for plunder and slaves – that made the Spanish look weak. Apaches and Comanches inverted the relationships of power and the tide of history that Europeans since Columbus and the conquistadors had imagined as proper and normal. North of the Rio Grande in Texas, the Spanish were rightly concerned about losing their foothold. Theirs was a shaky presence of isolated missions and thinly popu-

11 W. Dunn, Apache Relations in Texas, 1718–1750, in: Texas Historical Association Quarterly 14 (1911), p. 220; Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, pp. 32–36; E. John, Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540–1795, London 1975, pp. 246–255.

12 J. Gunnerson / D. Gunnerson, Apachean Culture: A Study Unity and Diversity, in: K. H. Basso / M. E. Opler (eds.), Apachean Culture History and Ethnology, Tucson 1971, p. 12.

13 There existed wide-ranging trade networks in human captives, linking French Louisiana to the silver mines of Spanish Mexico and the sugar fields of Cuba via the Comanches, Apaches and other indigenous groups, who both sold slaves and were enslaved themselves (see A. Reséndez, The Other Slavery: The Untold Story of Indian Enslavement in America, New York 2016).

14 D. Weber, Barbaros: Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment, New Haven 2006.

lated forts, which displayed a rather lethargic outlook if it was meant to prove a dynamic Spanish drive for expansion. For what was actually the world's largest empire at the time, it was a poor showing. Realizing their weakness, the Spanish envisioned an Apache barrier to protect San Antonio and other south Texas settlements from the Comanches. To this end, they engaged in diplomatic talks, offering Lipan Apaches gifts and supplies. They also set up San Saba, a mission where the Lipans would reside and become civilized under the friar's tutelage, coupled with a nearby presidio, where the Apaches would join the Spanish as brothers-in-arms against the Comanches.

The Lipans also entertained an alliance with the Spanish, being chronically short of allies in the face of the Comanche-led coalition. Already in 1743, the Comanches pursued Lipans to the vicinity of San Antonio, which made many Lipans seek protection from the Spanish missions and ask for new ones to be established. The contrast with their earlier reactions is striking. In the 1710s, when the Spanish showed up in the midst of Lipan lands, building missions for the sedentary Indians and setting up a presidio at San Antonio, the Lipans soon raided these settlements. The Spanish were interlopers who disrupted the Lipans' expansionist designs, often revolving around trade in horses and slaves up northeast toward the French, the Caddos and the Pawnees.[15] But, four decades later, the Lipans were ready to join the Spanish, as the Comanches had taken over their trade networks. Both the Lipans and the Spanish stood to gain by coming together, by publicizing their alliance and their shared determination to combat and counter the seemingly unstoppable Comanche conquest heading in their direction. Perhaps it was thought that the mere existence of this alliance would make the Comanches back off. It did not.

After the sacking of San Saba in 1758, the Comanches continued their advance. Making the Apache diaspora from the Plains complete, in 1766 a force of some four hundred Comanches and their allies stormed the mission San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz, a Lipan refuge southwest of San Antonio. Surviving Lipans fled in panic, some joining the Mescalero Apaches east of Pecos River, others crossing the Rio Grande into the mountains of Coahuila. By 1759 an estimated 2,500 diasporic Apaches lived between the Rio Grande and the Santa Rosa Mountains in Coahuila. There, the formerly powerful and expansionist Lipans were far enough away from the Comanches. Halting their flight, the Lipans built alliances with the Spanish, while also structuring a new economy by raiding ranches on both sides of the Rio Grande.[16]

In the 1770s, the Comanches controlled the Plains from the Arkansas Valley to San Antonio. And the Spanish recognized this, realizing that the Apaches were a losing bet. One of the advocates for a drastic change in Spanish colonial policy was the veteran officer Marqués de Rubí, appointed by the viceroy from Mexico City to inspect the

15 S. Robinson, I Fought a Good Fight: A History of the Lipan Apaches, Denton 2013, pp. 52–54.

16 Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, pp. 60–61; John, Storms, pp. 361–362, 369, 380; Robinson, I Fought, p. 89; C. Tunnell/W. W. Newcomb, Lipan Apache Mission: San Lorenzo de la Santa Cruz, 1762–1771, Austin 1969, pp. 167–172.

northern territories. Rubí's report from 1768, following his inspection tour, claimed that much of the Spanish empire in the north was a sham, an imaginary shadow-dominion inferior to the Apaches and the Comanches. He proposed abandoning any ideas of expansion, drawing a line of defence from Gulf of California to El Paso del Norte and via Rio Grande to the Gulf of Mexico. What he suggested would have meant the Spanish withdrawal from Texas (except San Antonio), the opening of diplomatic ties and trade with the Comanches and the expulsion of the Lipans from every mission and other Spanish locale, and driving them into the hands of their merciless Comanche enemies in the north. This, Rubí thought, would be interpreted by the Comanches as a sign of good will, and would make them look favourably on the Spanish. It would also bring about the total destruction of the Lipans. For Apache survivors, if there were any, Rubí recommended their removal to the interior provinces of New Spain, where, far removed from Apache land, they could be fully civilized and assimilated into Spanish society.[17] While Rubí's recommendations were not followed as such, they met with approval in the upper echelons of the Spanish administration, and brought about a realisation that the Spanish had failed at empire-building. One of the things they had been unable to prevent had been the large-scale diffusion of European imports to independent expansionists indigenous peoples. Now, both the Comanches and the Apaches countered Spanish colonialism using muskets, iron-tipped lances and horses.[18] Spain needed to go on the defensive, not only in Texas but along the length of its northern frontier.

2. Conquest and Assimilation in the Desert

In 1787, several Mescalero and Faraone Apache groups continued to seek relief from the intense Comanche pressure, opting to relocate further southward, leaving the Plains altogether and heading towards the Chihuahua Desert. They frequently approached Spanish commanders at posts in Nueva Vizcaya. On 22 May 1787, one group at El Paso del Norte told the Spanish officers that they feared the Comanches, since they had just recently wiped out a big Mescalero outfit. Once they settled at San Elizario and Presidio del Norte, these Apaches, scarred by colonial aggression, stuck close by and wanted Spanish escorts for protection when venturing toward the Plains for their buffalo hunts.[19] Their old hunting domains were now under Comanche occupation and thus the buffalo excursions often proved lethal. Hence, the Mescaleros needed to reinvent themselves. Unlike the Comanches' reinvention on the Plains as equestrian buffalo hunters, this Mescalero reinvention was done out of necessity. Yet, like the Comanches, the Mescaleros intended it to be an empowering and expansionist move. When the American explorer Zebulon

17 Rubi's ideas are discussed in M. Moorhead, The Apache Frontier: Jacobo Ugarte and Spanish-Indian Relations in Northern New Spain, 1769–1791, Norman 1968, pp. 116–117; John, Storms, pp. 434–441.

18 Hämäläinen, Comanche Empire, p. 64.

19 M. Babcock, Apache Adaptation to Hispanic Rule, Cambridge 2016, p. 117; Moorhead, Apache Frontier, pp. 207, 218, 220, 238.

Pike met Mescaleros in one of the Spanish dwellings, he immediately noted how the Apaches "spirit was not humbled […] necks were not bowed to the yokes of their [Spanish] invaders".[20] The Mescaleros and the Faraones started to support themselves as raiders of Spanish cattle, horses and mules in Coahuila and Nueva Vizcaya. They also became mobile mountain dwellers, who gave up – or at least seriously limited – their farming when relocating to the higher ground in the rugged mountain ranges in southern New Mexico and western Texas. There they could hide from their Comanche and Spanish enemies, and launch storming raids across the region.

Many Apaches who survived the loss of their Plains homelands joined their kinsmen in a southward push against the northern edge of the Spanish empire, creating a warzone hundreds of miles wide cutting through Sonora, Nuava Vizcaya and Coahuila. Apache raiders punctured the leaky Spanish defences, conducting raids that penetrated every more deeply into the interior. Raiders expanded Apache land at Spanish expense, while keeping their distance from the Comanches. In the process, the Apaches paralysed much of the Spanish mining industry and brought about a decline of commerce and the abandonment of numerous settlements. In northern Sonora escalating Apache assaults pushed toward Tucson, causing the distressed O'odham Indians to congregate into larger villages for defence and to relocate westward into the deserts and out of the Apaches' reach. It looked like the Spanish empire would fold again, this time in the face of Apache power.[21]

Seeking new options, the Viceroy of Northern Provinces, Bernardo de Gálvez, in 1786 and the Commandant General Pedro de Nava, in 1791, put into place a set of policies, whereby the Spanish invited Apaches to live in newly set-up reservations near Spanish settlements, providing regular provisions to those Apaches who would voluntarily settle down and waging war and enslaving those who did not. Provisions included corn or wheat, cigarettes, sugar, salt and meat as regular items, as well as Spanish clothing, weapons and horses as tokens of goodwill and trust. It was in many ways an enticing offer, containing much of what the Apaches already took by raiding. The Spanish sought to take advantage of existing Apache needs and to create new ones that could be satisfied only through reliance on the Spanish.[22] This was a volatile mix as Apaches used the system to their own ends, subverting Spanish intentions. Indeed, the Apaches turned the colonial relations envisaged by the Spanish on their head, by viewing Spanish provisions as payments for letting the Spanish live on Apache land, and by making the reservation system an indicator of Apache, rather than Spanish, empowerment.

The goal of the Spanish was to eliminate competition, since assimilation was meant to bring an end to Apache sovereignty and to change their lifestyle. The idea was to keep the Apaches under close surveillance, at or near (i.e. within a radius of twelve miles of)

20 Z. Pike, Journal of the Western Expedition, in: D. Jackson (ed.), The Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike with Letters and Related Documents, Norman 1966, pp. 401.

21 A. Alonso, Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier, Tucson 1995.

22 Moorhead, Apache Frontier, pp. 121–128.

the Spanish presidios in order to subject them to regular inspections. Provisions were meant to be temporary, to be given until the Apaches could support themselves via farming and ranching. Over time, it was thought that the Apaches would become more civilized and industrious sedentary farmers, casting off their "Apacheness" and adopting new identities, acculturating themselves as Hispanized settlers to the lower tiers of the multi-ethnic, hierarchical Spanish communities, much like other Indians had done over the course of Spanish colonial expansion in the Americas. This was very much a case of colonial civilizing mission, fitting the parameters of a worldwide effort where the – usually Euro-American – colonizers engaged the colonized with the intention of elevating them to civilized standards. The Spanish would lead this civilizing mission through personal example as well, by treating the Apaches cordially and with honour, teaching them Spanish-style good behaviour.[23] While the Spanish evidently did not extinguish Apache religious or social practices (such as marriage), they did push for conversion to Christianity and wanted Apache boys to attend Spanish schools, seeing these as important steps in elevating the Apaches from barbarity toward civilisation. They also aimed to change Apache notions of masculinity by curtailing independent military activities, and instead to harness Apache military skills for the service of the Spanish by employing them as auxiliaries and scouts.[24]

By the 1780s, the Apaches and Spaniards had a long history of meeting in many different contexts that blended intimacy and violence. Their interactions varied from being enemy expansionists in combat to intense trade relations, temporary and localized peace pacts, ad hoc military alliances against the Comanche and individual assimilation, often as captives in Spanish households or in Apache communities. Thus, moving in together was not that far-fetched idea, and those Apaches who lived closest to the Spanish picked up the Spanish language, manners and dress. For instance, members of the Compá family (Chiricahuas) lived inside the presidio walls at Janos, Nueva Vizcaya, attending its school and becoming literate in Spanish. A highly respected family, they were able to move between the Apache and Spanish worlds, gaining leadership positions in the Apache communities.[25]

In 1793, approximately 2,000 Apaches, Mescaleros, and Faraones, as well as the more western Chiricahua and Tonto, Pinal, and Aravaipa Apaches, had settled on eight *establecimientos* (reservations), situated near presidios along New Spain's northern frontier. Extending from Tucson (present-day Arizona), Bacoachi, and Fronters in Sonora, to Sabinal in New Mexico, and Janos, Carrizal, San Elizario, and Presido del Norte in Nueva Vizcaya (modern Chihuahua and Durango),[26] the reservations effectively formed a kind of demarcation line, where the outer rim of the Spanish colonial realm clashed up against Apache land. While hoping to assimilate the Apaches, the Spanish also continued

23 W. Griffen, Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750–1858, Norman 1998, pp. 99–101, 105.
24 Ibid., pp. 77, 106.
25 W. Griffen, The Compás: A Chiricahua Apache Family of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, in: American Indian Quarterly 7 (1983) pp. 21–49.
26 Babcock, Apache Adaptation, p. 2.

to differentiate them. They not merely waged military campaigns against non-reservation Apaches, but continued enslaving them. In fact, during the reservation era, it is possible that as many as 3,000 Apaches were enslaved and deported from Apache land toward Mexico City and Cuba. Dehumanizing them, the Spanish referred to these Apaches as *piezas* (pieces).[27]

Those Apaches who had settled down in the reservations actually continued moving. In theory, Apaches needed passports to leave the reservation to hunt or travel, and when doing so they were expected to leave their families behind (essentially as hostages).[28] In reality, many Apaches stayed on the reservations when it suited them. With permission or without, Apaches also moved from one reservation to the next, and joined independent Apaches against the Spanish, as well as the Spanish as allies against free Apache groups. Some used their Spanish language and cultural skills to hide their identities while moving through Spanish settlements. Many who had suffered from Comanche onslaughts probably just blended in, moved out of harm's way, cast off their Apache identity, and began to identify themselves as Hispanics. Some also found room in this liminal colonial space to join Spanish society on the basis of individual assimilation, such as through intermarriage. But many Apaches simply stayed away from the reservations for good, and it has been estimated that while perhaps as many as fifty per cent of Mescaleros sought security on the reservations, only ten per cent of Lipans did the same.[29]

In sum, Apaches used the reservation system to sustain and protect their families without giving up their independence or their expansionist raiding. Peace continued to be elusive in the contested colonial realm of Apache land. The reservation line was crossed by both Spanish forces seeking to destroy independent Apaches to the north and by cells of Apache raiders, seeking to exploit other groups' material resources and labour by raiding for, and partaking in "contraband" trade in, horses, weapons, captives and clothing on both sides of the line. Mobile Apache groups displayed a kind of colonial mindset towards the sedentary Spanish. While they were not interested in direct rule over subject peoples, they othered the Spanish as an inferior people, colonial subjects, and viewed raiding the Spanish sedentary peoples as their right. In Apache minds, Spanish villages, farms, ranches, wagon trains, mining camps and even military posts amounted to something like a vast chain of supply repositories. They existed basically as a means for Apaches to acquire food and other materials from any location most convenient for them. In the process, the Apaches saw the Spanish as inferior, as weak and effeminate men whom they could beat and dominate even using just rocks as weapons. Indicating a specific ethnic ranking, Apaches also referred to the Spanish as "herds" or "crops" from which they harvested their spoils, as the historian Mark Santiago writes.[30] This mindset was clearly remembered even generations later. When interviewed by the teacher and

27 M. Santiago, The Jar of Severed Hands: Spanish Deportation of Apache Prisoners of War, 1770–1810, Norman, 2011, pp. 5, 13, 201–203.

28 Griffen, Apaches, p. 100.

29 Babcock, Apache Adaptation, p. 2.

30 Santiago, Jar of Severed Hands, p. 13.

historian Eve Ball in the 1940s, Ace Daklugie, a Chiricahua Apache, spoke of his ancestors way of seeing things: "Did not their enemies have great herds of horses and cattle? Why should they [Chiricahuas] go hungry with abundance of food in their own land." He also added that "didn't the Mexicans [Spanish] owe them a livelihood" as they had invaded Apache land, killing game and using Apache water, grass and soil.[31] Here also lay the predicament. The Apaches were becoming more and more dependent on items they could only obtain from outsiders. In fact, their whole lifestyle as mobile mountain dwellers relied on raiding the resources of sedentary subject peoples.[32]

3. Conclusion

The reservation system lasted for a generation in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. By feeding the already sizable Apache appetite for Euro-American commodities, the Spanish unintentionally generated the conditions for a new phase of colonization once these provisions disappeared following Mexican independence. Later on, the Spanish saw this reservation era as a time of peace and prosperity, in stark contrast to the violence that resulted when the reservations were shut down in the 1830s and as the Apaches, alongside the Comanches, launched grand raiding excursions deep into Mexico's interior.[33] That phase of colonialism in Apache land culminated with the US invasion and annexation of northern Mexico in the 1840s.

Long before the US settler empire reached it, Apache land was a contested and shifting setting for rival, divergent claims by indigenous and Euro-American groups, a colonial zone where power and relations were renegotiated and recalibrated through violence and diplomacy. Apache land witnessed efforts from expansionists groups to supplant previous residents and capture terrestrial spaces with the intention of making them their own. It saw indigenous and Euro-American attempts at ethnic differentiation, competing lifestyles and colonial elimination, from violent extermination to assimilation. Apache land was subjected to conquest, exploitation of natural resources and human captives, long-range migration, substitution and the reproduction of one's own society on what used to be other people's lands. In short, Apache land was a colonial space.

31 E. Ball / N. Henn / L. Sanchez, Indeh: An Apache Odyssey, Provo 1980, p. 34.
32 J. Lahti, Wars for Empire: Apaches, the United States, and the Southwest Borderlands, Norman 2017.
33 DeLay, War of a Thousand Deserts.