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Lance R. Blyth

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# Chiricahua and Janos

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**BORDERLANDS AND TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES**

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| LANCE R. BLYTH

# Chiricahua and Janos

| Communities of Violence in the  
Southwestern Borderlands,  
1680–1880

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln & London

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For my mother  
Carolyn Louise Blyth  
1935–2009



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## | Preface

For over two hundred years the descendants of Spanish settlers and Apache Indians did violence to each other in the region known as the Southwestern Borderlands; historical, cultural, and geographical shorthand for the area on either side of the current U.S.-Mexican border. From the 1680s to the 1880s members of both communities regularly committed acts of violence, even as they often negotiated or traded. It may be illustrative to many to map this two-century scale of time onto the history of the United States. Consider a New England in 1875 that had just concluded King Phillip's War with the Wampanoag begun two hundred years prior. Think of a South in which the Creek towns of Alabama remained at war with American settlements in Tennessee until 1975. Or consider the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, where I write these words today, still being the scene of Cheyenne raids and Anglo revenge until at least the late 2060s, with flare-ups into the next decade. It is mind-boggling to think of a conflict running for that length of time.

As I confronted this reality I turned to David Nirenberg's *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, which provides the central insight of this work. Nirenberg looked at conflicts and violent episodes in the relations among Christians, Jews, Muslims, and lepers in northeastern Spain and southern France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He studied "cataclysmic" violence that featured attacks on Jews, lepers, and Muslims, motivated by rebellion against the monarchy and social conflict, and "systemic" violence, which arose from "everyday transgressions of religious boundaries" via conversion, interfaith sexuality,

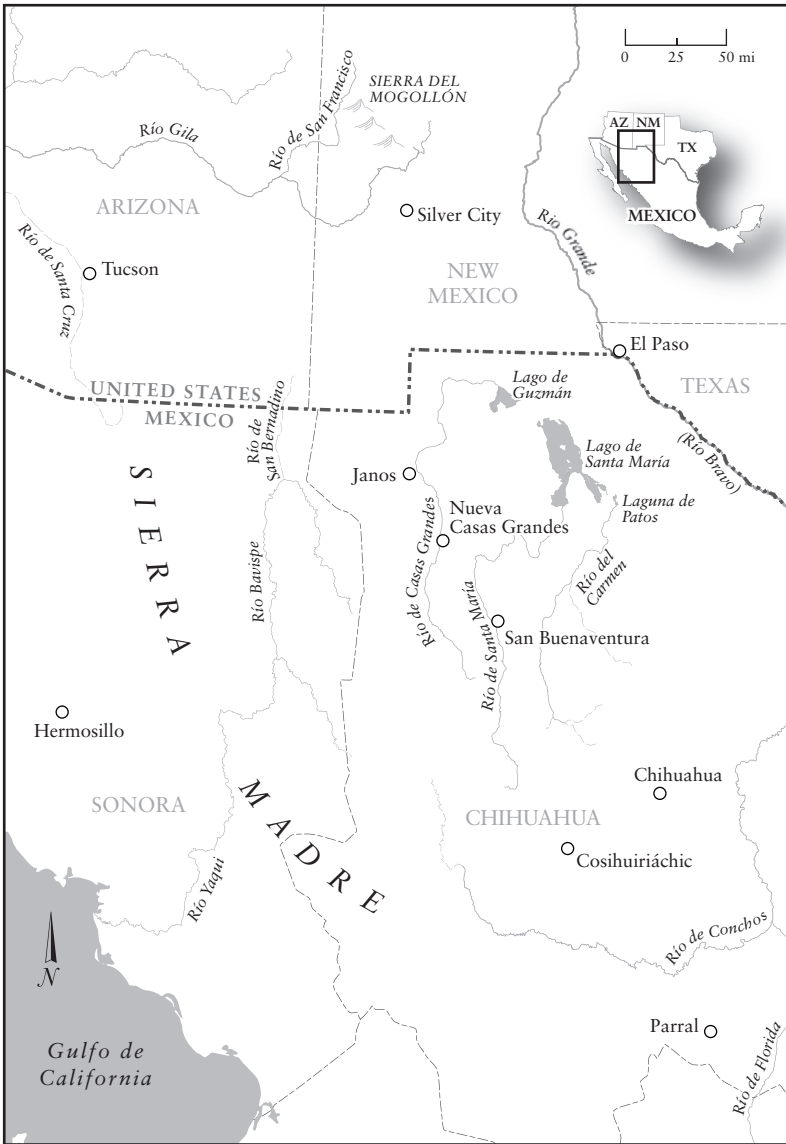
commensality, dress, and topography. As Nirenberg studied religious communities who were members of a single society and subjects of a medieval state, his categories and methods of analysis did not readily transplant to the Southwestern Borderlands. But his central thesis, that violence was not a sign of intolerance but was, instead, “a central and systematic aspect of the coexistence of majority and minorities in medieval Spain” and that “a constructive relationship between conflict and coexistence” prevailed, did cause me to rethink my assumptions about violence.<sup>1</sup>

I took from Nirenberg the realization that violence is instrumental in establishing, maintaining, and changing relationships both within and between communities. Violence can be a useful tool for communities to employ, particularly in areas where no single political organization or cultural group has a monopoly on its use, such as borderlands. It is just such communities to which I apply Nirenberg’s appellation of “communities of violence.” While I focus on a borderland, called the Southwestern Borderlands in expectation that most readers will view the region from this geographical viewpoint, there are many other borderlands at other times and other places. Even a cursory study of those borderlands will likely reveal their own communities of violence.

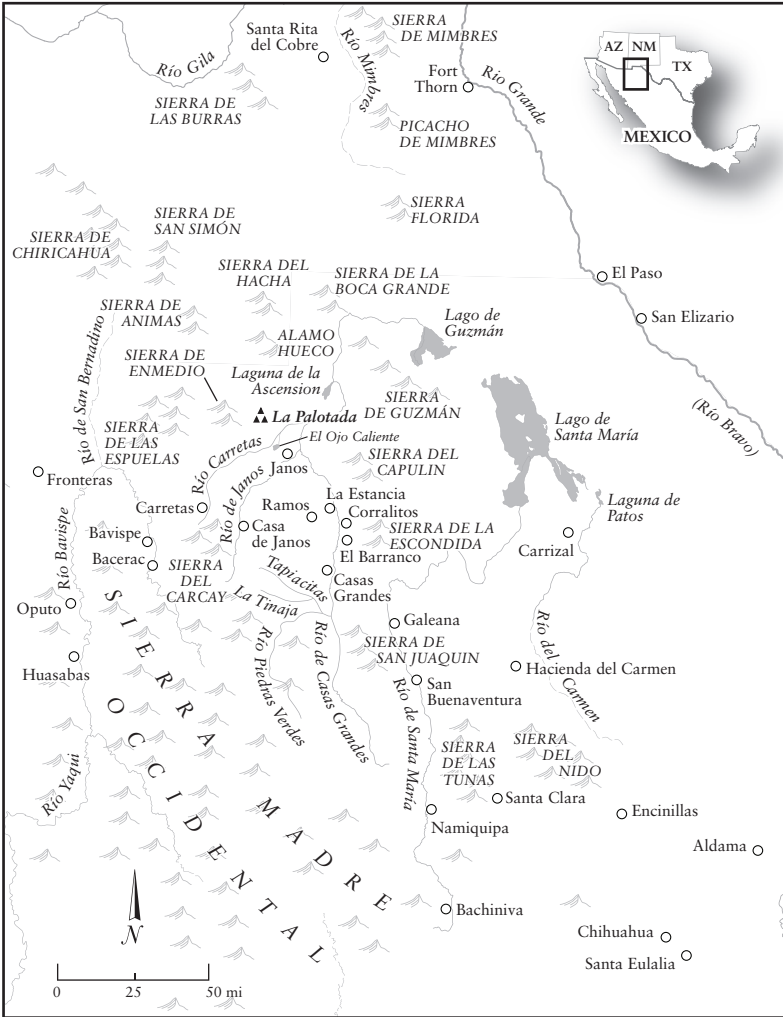
The study of the Southwestern Borderlands—and borderlands in general—is no stranger to violence, yet I seek to take a different tack. I try to identify individual members from the two communities whenever possible in the text. I attempt to braid the strands of these individuals and their respective communities, both native and settler, into a single narrative thread, emphasizing their similarities and common humanity, even as they attempted to do violence to one another. I treat violence as a readily available tool in the human survival toolkit. And I believe this is the main contribution of my work. By taking a deep, unblinking view of violence, showing not only its negative aspects but also the potential positive outcomes for the individuals and communities involved, I hope to help us understand and account for violence better, both

in the Southwestern Borderlands and in others—yesterday, today, tomorrow.

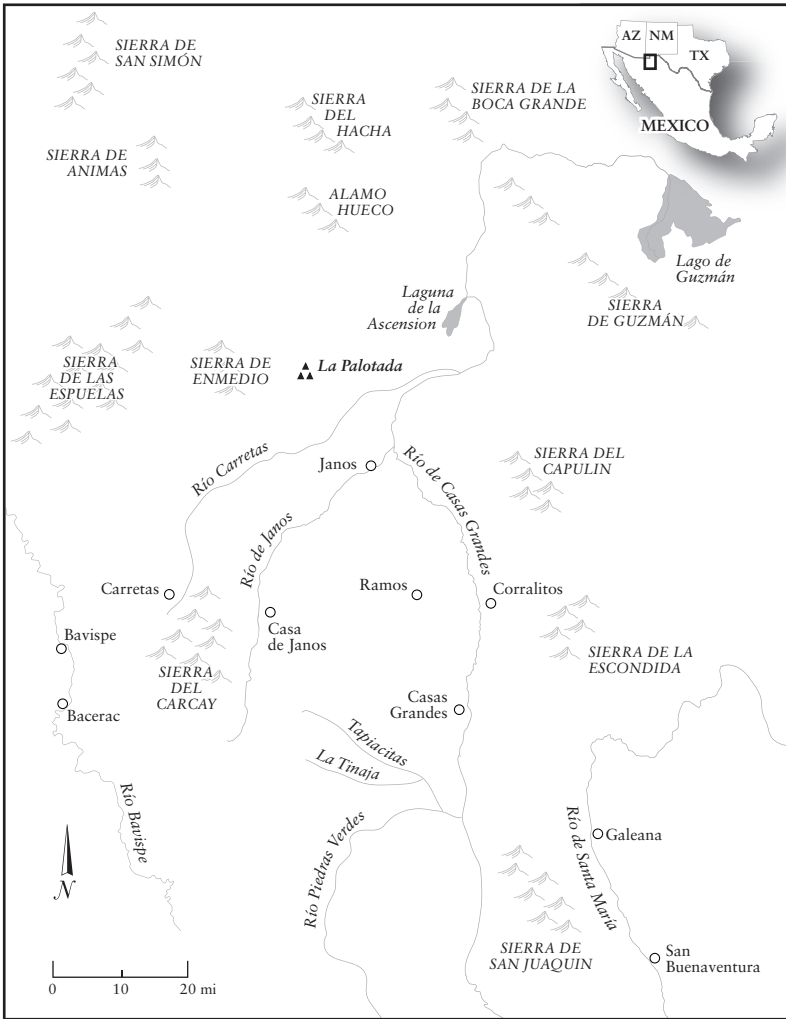
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Map 1. Northwestern Mexico and southwestern United States



Map 2. Northwestern Nueva Vizcaya region, ca. 1800



Map 3. Part of the Janos jurisdiction

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## | Chapter 1

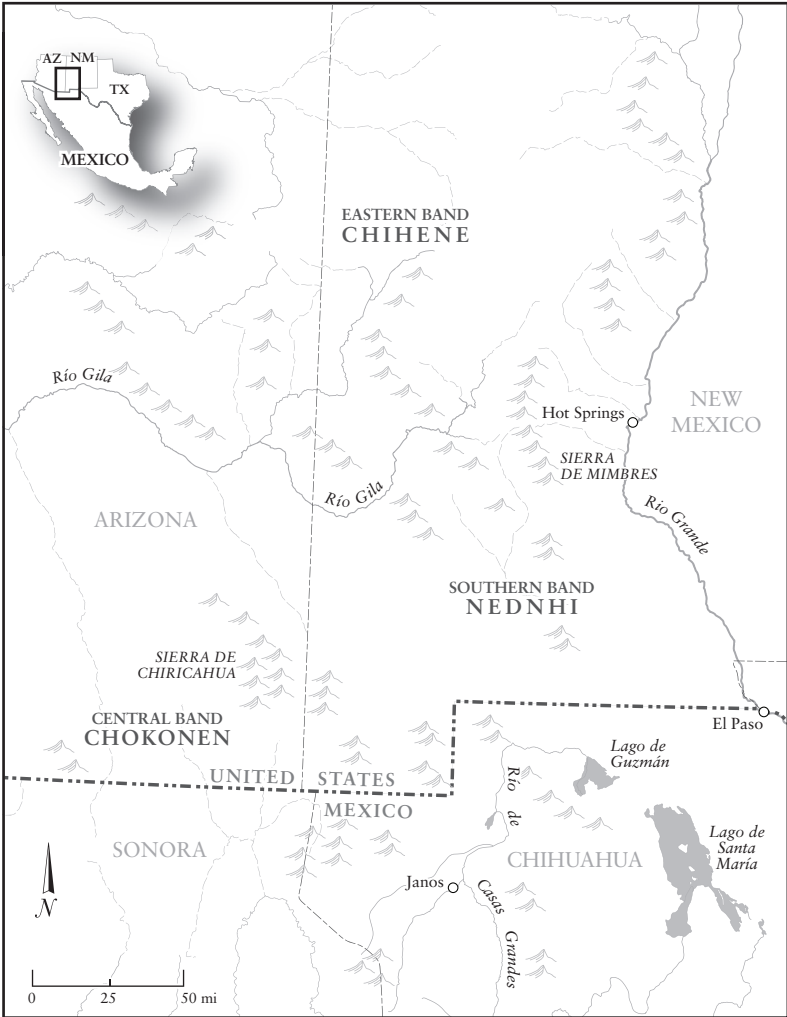
### Communities of Violence

#### Apaches and Hispanics in the Southwestern Borderlands

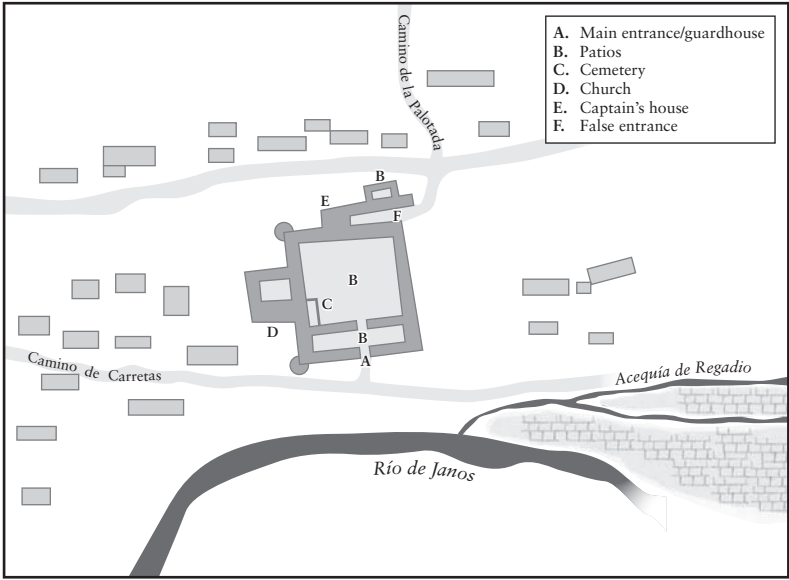
With guns on their saddle-bows and lances at their stirrups the Sonorans rode over the mountains in the half-light of morning. The target of their wrath was the group of Chiricahua Apaches encamped outside the town Apaches called Kaskiyeh. As the Sonorans descended the pass they split into two parties: one to surprise a camp southeast of town, the other targeting Apaches to the west.

#### The Killings at Kaskiyeh

The first contingent found the campsite abandoned and so pressed on to Kaskiyeh, killing two Apaches and capturing several more along the way. The second group of Sonorans charged into the western Apache camp, brutally brushed aside an attempted parley, and killed four men and four women. While most Chiricahuas escaped into the hills, some fled to Kaskiyeh and found refuge in the houses of its Mexican inhabitants. As the sun rose the Sonorans converged on Kaskiyeh—Janos, as its Hispanic inhabitants called it—a long-time garrison community in northwestern Chihuahua. Since they outnumbered the garrison, the Sonoran mob ignored the protests of the commander of Janos and his lieutenant, Baltasar Padilla. They invaded Janos and forcibly took Apaches from houses, killing several.



Map 4. Chiricahua, ca. 1850



Map 5. Janos, after a drawing by José Urrutia, 1766

After nightfall the surviving Chiricahuas—including a man known as Goyahkla—rendezvoused in the woods along the river. These survivors discovered many of their men and women were dead and many more had been captured, including Goyahkla's wife, mother, and three children. Realizing they were outnumbered in the heart of enemy country the Chiricahuas retired northward to their homeland on the headwaters of the Gila River. Meanwhile, the Sonorans occupied Janos and uncovered the contraband trade between Chiricahuas and Janeros. After five days the Sonorans departed Janos with their Chiricahua prisoners—six men, four women, and fifty-two children—and more than three hundred head of livestock, including thirty-eight horses and mules with Sonoran brands taken from citizens of Janos, leaving Chihuahuan officials vainly protesting the Sonoran incursion to the central government.<sup>1</sup> But Goyahkla was not done.

Nearly a year later Goyahkla inspired Chiricahuas to avenge the killings of their kin at Kaskiyeh in a climactic battle against the Sonorans, during which he earned the sobriquet of Geronimo. This battle was the start, as Geronimo remembered it, of decades of conflict with the Mexicans and eventually the Americans that led to his ultimate exile and imprisonment by the United States. Since Geronimo recounted the events during his captivity nearly fifty years after the fact, either his memory was playing tricks on him, or he may have been playing tricks with his memory. The battle Geronimo presented as revenge almost twelve months after the Sonoran attack likely took place six weeks prior to the killings at Kaskiyeh. So what he recounted as retaliation was a provocation. Reversing the order of events in his recounting, Geronimo illustrated the primacy of violence in Chiricahuas' dealings with Hispanic communities in the Southwestern Borderlands, including Janos.<sup>2</sup>

Geronimo was not alone in “re-remembering” events in light of the killings at Kaskiyeh. Baltasar Padilla, stung by accusations and evidence of coexistence and active cooperation with Chiricahuas, went beyond his habitual one-sentence synopsis of his actions in that year's service record. With a different pen Padilla proceeded to list

every expedition, campaign, skirmish, or pursuit against the Apaches he either led or participated in over the previous decade. Padilla filled up the page with his recollections before he ran out of space, breaking off in midsentence and midword: “Hay otra camp . . .” (There was another camp[aign]).<sup>3</sup> Faced with evidence of nonviolent interaction with the Apaches, Padilla wrote an addendum to his services rendered insisting on the dominance of violence in Janos’s relations with Indian communities, especially Chiricahua.

### Communities and Violence

The memories and remembrances of Geronimo and Padilla are emblematic of Chiricahua and Janos as “communities of violence” where violence drove relations—both conflictive and cooperative—not only between but also within the two communities.<sup>4</sup> The experiences of both men suggest that violence did not mean the end of interactions between Janos and Chiricahua, but was instead “an essential means by which that interaction occurred.”<sup>5</sup> Violence often drove the two communities to peaceful dealings—negotiations, trade, treaties—which had the possibility of future violence looming over them, as these contacts between the two could lead to acts of violence, which in turn might carry the potential of future peace. As James F. Brooks noted, “borderland violence was not solely destructive but produced enduring networks of economic and social relations.”<sup>6</sup> In this work I argue similarly for the centrality of violence in the relationships and exchanges between and within borderland communities.

The community of Janos was a European-derived, Hispanic *presidio* (garrison community) in present-day northwestern Mexico, with connections to other towns and settlements southward along the valley of San Diego, the valleys of Santa María and Santa Clara to the east, El Paso to the northeast, southeast to Chihuahua, and west over the sierras to Sonora.<sup>7</sup> Chiricahua was an Athapaskan-descended, Apache community that lived to the north-northwest of Janos along the upper drainages of the Río Gila and Río Mimbres and whose descendants live today in Oklahoma and southeastern

New Mexico. The Chiricahua tribe was historically divided into three bands. The Eastern Band, also called the Chihene (Red Paint People), lived in present-day southwestern New Mexico, the Central Band or Chokonen in present-day southeastern Arizona, and the Southern Band or Nednhi (Enemy People) in northwestern Chihuahua and northeastern Sonora.<sup>8</sup>

Both Chiricahua and Janos were collections of several hundred families, whose total population never topped more than several thousand, living within socially determined boundaries. Chiricahua was a region where camping areas for families and groups of families changed with the seasons. Janos was a town with houses gathered around a plaza, itself centered on the presidio, with streets, fields, and pastures farther beyond. While they were different in form, Janos and Chiricahua were the same in function. Communities are not just a people in a place but are best understood as sets of relationships. The primary purpose of these relationships was to ensure cooperation in order for the members of the community to survive.

Chiricahuas and Janeros experienced their community as a set of increasingly extended kinship ties, a shared ethnic identity, familiar language, and common moral and material culture, all of which provided visual, audible, and olfactory clues as to who was a member of the community—one of “us”—and who was one of “them,” cueing members how to act appropriately.<sup>9</sup> The more altruistic a community the more likely it would survive and allow its members to reproduce, even at the cost of individual deaths in conflict with outsiders, since in-group cooperation possessed a dark side: out-group aggression.<sup>10</sup> The willingness of humans to kill those they perceive as “beyond the pale” of their community is well attested to in the paleographic, archeological, ethnographic, and historical records.<sup>11</sup>

The communities of Chiricahua and Janos lived in the region referred to in this work as the Southwestern Borderlands. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries the Southwestern Borderlands was a region betwixt and between Indian, European, and

Euro-American polities and cultures with overlapping, interacting, ever-shifting, and conflicting geographic, political, demographic, cultural, and economic boundaries.<sup>12</sup> The sheer flux of the region, combined with the negative aspect of communal identity, meant violence would dominate any relations as no one had a monopoly of violence over the entire borderlands.

Apaches were spatially and socially distributed across the Southwestern Borderlands to take maximum advantage of all available resources, and they relocated each season. Chiricahua economic, social, and religious institutions thus lacked the ability to create or maintain the physical power to dominate or control more territory or population than was needed at the immediate moment in their food quest.<sup>13</sup> Since the Southwestern Borderlands lay beyond the resource-producing mines, settled Indian villages, and haciendas of central Mexico, it simply did not pay for either the imperial Spanish or national Mexican state to secure the area fully. While Janos was a state-sponsored presidio from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, there were never enough presidios to dominate the region, and they rarely had the manpower needed to cover the complex terrain.

This lack of power in both polities meant neither had “an enduring monopoly in the use of violence.”<sup>14</sup> Thus either community could use violence to pursue their own self-interest. Both therefore had ample reason to distrust the other, to stand ready to do violence at any time, or to strike before being struck. If they suffered violence, both communities knew they would have to take an implacable revenge to reestablish some level of deterrence and maintain a reputation of toughness in the hope of deflecting future violence.<sup>15</sup> Violence was thus the primary option and may have been the only means for both settler and native communities to establish, sustain, or change relations with each other.

An understandable tendency exists to think of violence as “anomalous, irrational, senseless, and disruptive.” When viewed in a cross-cultural perspective, however, violence emerges as a human universal, a constituting element of societies, and a critical ingredient



for their realities. Violence in this view, far from being meaningless, is full of meaning. Violence creates and constitutes relations, to the extent that violence is often intrinsic in relationships; determining, dominating, driving, dictating. As meaningful action, violence is a “form of interaction and communication.” As an “experienced reality,” violence is best understood via “its incorporation in the streams of human life” and history.<sup>16</sup>

Neither Janos nor Chiricahua is a historiographical stranger. Anthropologist William B. Griffen earlier studied the Apache experience at Janos presidio and its jurisdiction, seeking the basis of the conflict between Apaches and Hispanics. As Griffen was careful to paint Apaches as historical actors in their own right, he located heart of the matter in Indian social, cultural, and economic organizations. While he concluded that violence was central to Apache culture and economy, the scope of his work was the experience of Apache leaders, society, and culture with Spanish and Mexican policies and administration. Janos presidio was the site, not a subject of his work.<sup>17</sup> A quick perusal of the notes in the present work, however, reveal its debt to Griffen’s efforts.

Recent scholarship on the Southwestern Borderlands has been sensitive to the role of violence. James F. Brooks’s path-finding work cast the Southwestern Borderlands as a field of relationships among Indian peoples, Spaniards and then Mexicans, and finally Americans. Slavery, captivity, and redemption, interacting with and interpenetrated by cultural ideas of gender, kinship, honor, and subsistence, defined these relationships. Slavery bound societies together in the borderlands; it created bonds that violence did not break but enhanced. Violence, for Brooks, formed the basis of his relational field.<sup>18</sup>

Juliana Barr used gender as a lens to view relationships between Indians and Spaniards in eighteenth-century Texas. Natives dictated relationships via a gendered kinship system. Indians brought gendered understandings and practices to their relationships—contact, diplomacy, alliance, peace—with Spaniards. Barr covered violence as part of gendered “practices of peace.”<sup>19</sup> Pekka

Hämäläinen explored a wide range of relationships—ecological and environmental, kinship and gender, captives and labor, trade and raid—between the Comanche and their neighbors in the borderlands. These relations allowed for political construction and cooperation among Comanches and alliances with other Indian peoples and Spanish colonial authorities. The Comanche were thus able to establish a regional indigenous hegemony, a “Comanche Empire.” Hämäläinen showed violence as one of many calculated, rational, and orderly policies.<sup>20</sup>

Other scholars have focused on violence in the borderlands. Ned Blackhawk used violence as the “overarching theme,” but saw pain, especially Indian pain, as the “object” of his study of Great Basin Indians. Utes initially raided New Mexico in retaliation for Spanish attacks but soon turned to raiding more distant Indians for slaves to trade in New Mexico. Utes thus “displaced” Spanish violence by attacking other natives. These waves of violence pulsing out from Spanish settlement shattered and reshaped Indian peoples, bringing them into the orbit of the Spanish and then American empires. Blackhawk emphasized the role of violence as one of Indian displacement and colonization.<sup>21</sup>

Brian DeLay centered violence in his history of the Southern Plains, Mexico, and the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, seeking the origins of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846 to 1848. Indian raiders laid waste to northern Mexico, killing and capturing thousands of Mexicans and taking innumerable livestock, creating a thousand man-made deserts of abandoned ranches, mines, and settlements. DeLay noted that native warriors sought not only plunder but also vengeance on Mexicans for past wrongs and status among their people. Yet the violence of the “War of a Thousand Deserts” ultimately allowed American expansionists to justify their programs and so weakened Mexico that it was unable to resist American aggression.<sup>22</sup> Karl Jacoby too employed violence to focus his study of Spanish, Mexican, American, Western Apache, and Tohono O’odham interactions. All these communities lived in harsh terrain where practices of agriculture,

pastoralism, and raiding overlapped, deepening the conflict and hatreds among all the groups. This hatred exploded in the Camp Grant massacre of April 30, 1871, with which Jacoby begins his work. He anchored his work firmly and effectively in questions of genocide and massacre, history and memory.<sup>23</sup>

This work is intended to build upon the efforts of these scholars. It traces how violence dominated the relations between two borderland communities by which both increased in size via incorporation and captives; the relations of violence also reproduced each community by establishing a path to male adulthood and marriage; sustained both communities by providing for families; maintained interactions by revenge and retaliation; and ultimately placed both communities in a “security dilemma.” By foregrounding violence, this work aims to extrapolate through illustration what violence was in a borderland setting in all its forms, types, and consequences by and for both natives and settlers.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, for Chiricahua and Janos, violence created their social and economic meanings and constituted their cultural realities for over two hundred years in the borderlands.

The histories of this violence between Chiricahua and Janos are found in two “archives.” The Janos archive is the traditional type well known to historians. It consists of more than forty thousand documents in archives and libraries and on rolls of microfilm. The archive includes official correspondence, troop reviews, ration issues, Indian affairs, criminal proceedings, daily diaries, campaign reports, financial accounts, instructions and orders, regulations, inventories, records of military service, censuses, and lists of equipment, supplies, horses, students, and so forth. The Janos archive speaks in the official voice of who, what, when, where, and occasionally why.<sup>25</sup> While much about Chiricahua can be found in the Janos archive, the Chiricahua archive is quite different. It consists of myths, tales, and stories, glossed as “oral history,” along with ethnographic reports, all from the early part of the twentieth century. While this archive lacks much historical specificity, it is invaluable in transmitting the historical experience and memory

of Chiricahuas. The Chiricahua archive may not tell much of the when or where of an event but is rich in how it would be remembered.<sup>26</sup> This work therefore combines information and insights from these two archives, allowing each community to speak with its own voice by alternating their shared experiences. And one set of experiences they shared were the histories of violent interactions both communities had long before they settled alongside each other.

### The Last Conquistadors

With a simple wooden cross in the ground between them, two groups of mounted men faced each other across the plaza of San Juan Pueblo in the September sunlight of 1598 to perform a play. The *Moros* (Moors) led by the Sultán, in faux flowing robes and turbans, took their places on one side of the plaza. Sitting astride their horses on the other side, dressed in what finery survived the months on the trail northward from New Spain, were the *Cristianos* (Christians) under their lord Don Alfonso, watching as one Christian posted himself as a sentinel near the cross. The Sultán announced to the watching crowd that it was evening as he gave the orders to form his men for battle, but first he decided to send a spy to capture the cross. The Moorish spy approached the Christian sentinel, telling him he wished to convert. With the aid of the wineskin he carried, the spy put the sentinel to sleep and returned with the Holy Cross to the Sultán. Declaring it was a new morning as he rode forth into the plaza a few moments later, Don Alfonso learned of the loss of the cross from his lieutenant and ordered an immediate attack: “Onward, my brave soldiers, to vanquish the foe. By our valor, these infamous hordes shall be destroyed.” Three times the Christians charged their foes that day, swirling around the Moors, swords clashing, to the “olés” of the watching crowd. All three times the Moors repulsed them.

Announcing it was the start of a second day, and certain of victory, the Sultán offered to ransom the Holy Cross, only to be rebuffed by Don Alfonso, who directed a new assault on the Moors. Both sides clashed three more times, the dust from their horses’ hooves

mingling with sweat, spittle, and blood from accidental wounds. After the third skirmish the Christians prevailed, capturing the Sultán and all his men, with Don Alfonso personally recovering the cross. Brought before Don Alfonso, the Sultán exclaimed: “Christian, your valor has me prostrate at your feet. I beg you, by your Cross, and by your almighty God, give me freedom, for I am convinced that only your God is true.” Don Alfonso, with the Holy Cross in his hand, dismounted, helped the Sultán to his feet, and pardoned him and his subjects. Remounting, Don Alfonso led both groups united in religion and allegiance twice around the plaza, before riding out. It is unknown what the Pueblo Indians watching from the roof tops thought of the strange spectacle before them, but the Spanish audience knew exactly what they had just witnessed: the drama of *Moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians), a theatrical enactment of conquest, assimilation, and reconciliation.<sup>27</sup>

Spaniards performed mock battles between Christians and Moors from the earliest days of the *Reconquista* (reconquest); the centuries-long recovery of the Iberian peninsula from its Muslim conquerors.<sup>28</sup> The conquerors of Mexico performed *Moros y cristianos* and Hispanics continued to perform the festival in the borderlands, including in the province of Nueva Vizcaya during the colonial period and in New Mexico well into present times.<sup>29</sup> The play’s emphasis on total victory and the ultimate conversion of Hispanic foes was completely at odds with the borderlands reality of undefeated and often hostile Indian peoples. This did not matter, as the outcome of *Moros y cristianos* was less important than the relationship it envisioned with Indian peoples: confronted and defeated by Hispanic military prowess but not annihilated—rather, integrated and assimilated.<sup>30</sup> Yet the participants in the first *Moros y cristianos* in New Mexico at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on September 8, 1598, were not just reenacting a conquest; they were enacting one: the conquest of New Mexico under Juan de Oñate.<sup>31</sup>

This fact was not lost on the Indians watching the festivities, among them men from the western pueblo of Acoma, who were less than impressed with what they saw. The war faction at Acoma

failed to convince the rest of the pueblo to kill Oñate when the Spaniard visited their mesa-top village several months later and received an oath of submission from its elders. After this, the war faction finally convinced their people of the necessity to fight the invaders. When the next party of Spaniards climbed up the mesa to visit Acoma the Indians ambushed them, hunted them down, and killed them one by one. Only the three watching the horses at the base of the mesa escaped to tell the tale. Oñate promptly held a judicial proceeding on what to do about Acoma. One of his captains testified that if the Spaniards did not attack, they would have no security anywhere in New Mexico. The Franciscan fathers insisted that Acoma first had to be given the chance to surrender. If they refused, then any attack on them would be a just war. Hence, when a force consisting of more than half of the Spanish fighting men in New Mexico approached Acoma, they marched around the mesa three times, then called upon Acoma, again three times, to surrender and submit. Each time the people of Acoma refused, yelling insults, shooting arrows, hurling spears, and throwing rocks from atop their seemingly impregnable natural fortress.<sup>32</sup>

The next day, with the low winter sun slipping toward the western horizon behind them, the Spanish main body feinted at one side of the mesa, drawing all the Indians to defend against them, allowing twelve selected men to climb, unmolested and unspotted, up the other side. This number included Gaspar Perez de Villagr a, who would later write an epic poem of the conquest, the *Historia de la Nueva M xico*. Villagr a's forlorn hope secured a foothold on the mesa against desperate Acoma counterattacks. By dawn the next day more Spaniards joined the twelve and began a brutal, house-to-house fight. Villagr a's tortured rhymes described the scene:

No skillful reapers do more swiftly yield  
Their curving sickles, flashing rapidly,  
When they do quickly knot within their arms  
One handful after another and do so  
Set up their sheaves in a thousand places

As these brave, haughty combatants  
Who, stumbling upon a lofty mound  
Of bodies now dead, never ceased  
To shed apace a might sum  
Of fresh red blood, by which the wall  
Was everywhere, upon all sides,  
Bathed and ensanguined, and nothing  
Remained that was not sprent with it.<sup>33</sup>

Hauling two small cannon, culverins, up onto the mesa tipped the battle in the favor of the Spaniards, and the cannons' burning wadding set the pueblo afire. As the sun set on the second day of fighting, the flickering flames revealed some 600 to 800 Acomas dead, with another 600 captured, mainly women and children.<sup>34</sup>

To this point the Acoma Revolt followed the paradigm of the *Moros y cristianos* these same men had celebrated only months prior—treachery, battle, and retribution—but repentance, forgiveness, and assimilation did not follow. Oñate placed the surviving Acomas on trial at Santo Domingo Pueblo, found them guilty, and ordered a series of brutal punishments. Men over the age of 25 had one foot cut off and were condemned to 20 years of personal servitude. Males aged 12 to 24 years received 20 years of servitude, as did women over 12 years of age. Children under the age of 12, not guilty due to their youth, fell to the Franciscan fathers for a Christian upbringing. The Franciscans soon dispatched sixty small girls to Mexico City, never to return home to their kin. Oñate instructed that two Hopi Indians captured during the fight at Acoma be sent back to their pueblos to carry the news of the punishment, minus their right hands. Oñate directed that the mutilations of the twenty-four men be carried out over a number of days at several nearby pueblos to have as wide an impact as possible. While Oñate may have intended this to cow the Pueblo Indians, the conquerors lost whatever sense of ease they might have had in New Mexico.<sup>35</sup>

The parallel performance of *Moros y cristianos* and the story

captured in Villagr a's *Historia* illustrate the primacy of violence in relations with Indian peoples by Janos's ancestors. The last conquistadors, descendants of whom would come to found Janos some eighty years later, sought to dominate Indian peoples, but in order to assimilate them, and bring them into the dual embrace of the Spanish crown and Christian cross. Under cross and crown all would be reconciled, all would live in harmony, all would prosper, in this world and the next. Faced with treacherous resistance and dangerous defiance, carefully proven to be illegal, the Spanish seemingly turned reluctantly to violence—or wished it to seem that way—to establish and maintain the preferred relationship between themselves and the Indians. Yet Indian peoples, including Chiricahua ancestors, had their own historical understandings of the need to do violence.

### Killer of Monsters

One spring a band of ancestral Apaches, Apacheans, called Que-rechos by the settled peoples along the great river to the west, camped on the Southern Great Plains, their buffalo-hide lodges spread along the banks of a narrow and shallow but flowing river. When they spotted a group of oddly dressed strangers approaching, some riding on animals like large dogs, they came out to see the newcomers. They had likely heard of these folk who came into the land of Tiguex during the previous year when the Apacheans went to trade buffalo hides, deer skins, and jerked meat for corn and blankets with the inhabitants of Cicucue to the west. Among the strangers was a man the Apacheans recognized as one of the peoples to the northeast so they communicated with him via hand signs. They informed El Turco, as the strangers called him, that if the strangers followed the river eastward they would eventually reach a great river with many towns.

El Turco, in turn, likely told the Apacheans of the bloody war waged by these strangers on the people of Tiguex over the winter and of the demands for food and goods they placed on people they encountered. The Apacheans were therefore wary when the leader



of the strangers caught up with his advance party and questioned them again about lands to the east. So the next morning they loaded their lodges and goods onto travois hauled by a pack of protesting dogs and moved away from the new people. The Apacheans probably reasoned that they already had one enemy on the plains, the Teyas, and they did not need any more. These ancestral Apaches, descended from killers of monsters as remembered in their tales, understood communities of violence.<sup>36</sup>

As Geronimo told the story, “In the beginning the world was covered with darkness. There was no sun, no day. The perpetual night had no moon or stars.” In this land ancestral Chiricahuas tried to live, but the tribe of the beasts and the serpents kept killing them. The beasts and serpents met often in council with the feathered tribe of the birds, led by the eagle. The birds wanted daylight admitted to the world, but the beasts continually refused. Finally, the birds made war against the beasts. “The beasts were armed with clubs, but the eagle had taught his tribe to use bows and arrows. . . . They fought for many days, but at last the birds won a victory.” The birds killed many beasts and monsters, but they proved unable to kill them all. The birds, however, now controlled the council and they admitted light to the world. Only with daylight and most of the monsters killed could Chiricahua forebears begin to live in the world.<sup>37</sup>

When and where the Apacheans entered the world of the Southwestern Borderlands is uncertain. They migrated from the Arctic southward across the Great Basin, on the plains across the Texas Panhandle and eastern New Mexico, or down the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, and onto the Southern Great Plains sometime before their initial encounter with Spaniards from Francisco Vázquez de Coronado’s expedition that May day in 1541.<sup>38</sup> Wherever and whenever they entered the plains, the Apacheans did so as an invasion that “*did* involve violence,” as the land was already occupied by the Teyas.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes they traded with the Pueblo Indians along the Rio Grande and sometimes they raided. As the Pueblo villages were capable of producing an annual surplus

of corn to trade, trading meat for corn was a “less costly means” for the Plains Indians to gain calories than year-round hunting. This made hunting grounds valuable and contributed to the violence between the Apacheans and the Teyas.<sup>40</sup> For ancestral Chiricahuas the Teyas with their tattooed faces and bodies could have been seen as yet another set of monsters that would not let them live in the world.

As Chiricahuas later told it, since the birds did not kill all the monsters, four remained, killing their ancestors. One monster, Giant, kept eating the children of White Painted Woman, the first woman. The Creator brought White Painted Woman a child via a rainstorm and when he was born she named him Child of the Water. White Painted Woman kept Child of the Water from Giant via various subterfuges until he turned four, when he took up a bow and arrows made of grama grass and set out to kill the monsters. While hunting in the forest he provoked Giant to a duel. Giant, secure in his four-layer flint coat, fired his four arrows made of pine trees at Child of the Water, but missed all four times. It was then Child of the Water’s turn. “Child of the Water shot at him. The topmost layer of his flint coat slid off him. The next layer, as he shot at him again, this one slid off him also. He shot at him again for the third time. The third time, his coat again slid off him. Then his heart could clearly be seen beating. Child of the Water shot at him for the fourth time. He shot the arrow right into the center of his heart.” Giant crashed to the ground, dead.<sup>41</sup>

To kill the second monster, the monster eagles, Child of the Water covered himself in deer entrails and was carried by the father monster eagle to his nest high in the mountains as food for his children. There Child of the Water killed the little monster eagles, sparing only the littlest. He then ambushed and killed the father and mother monster eagles, before having the littlest monster eagle carry him to the ground, where Child of the Water killed it too. The next monster was the buffalo bull, who lived in the middle of the plains and killed people with his eyes by just looking at them. Gopher helped Child of the Water by digging four tunnels,

each one deeper than the previous one, under the buffalo. “Then Child of the Water went in. There was the buffalo lying right there. You could see the heart beating. Child of the Water shot that buffalo right through the heart. Then the buffalo was furious and began to dig into that tunnel.”<sup>42</sup>

But the buffalo died before he reached Child of the Water in the fourth, deepest, tunnel. The last monster, the antelope, who also killed with his eyes, Child of the Water killed with the help of Lizard, who shot an arrow in all four directions. The antelope chased each arrow in turn, before dying from exhaustion. White Painted Woman sang and danced upon his returning home for Child of the Water killed all the monsters that would not let Chiricahuas live.<sup>43</sup>

Experiences on the Southern Plains and the memories recorded in the battle of the birds and the beasts for daylight and in Child of the Water’s exploits illustrate the importance of violence for Chiricahua relations with other peoples. White Painted Woman simply wanted to live with her family but faced terrible and powerful monsters who preyed upon them. Child of the Water turned to violence to allow his family to live. The Chiricahua ancestors thus understood that they might have to use violence to ensure the proper relations with their neighbors, whether tattooed Teyas, town-dwelling Pueblos, or the new Spaniards, if these peoples would not let Chiricahuas live as they wished.

### Chiricahua and Janos

The rest of this book considers what happened after both Apache and Hispanic populations settled in the northern Sierra Madre region in the later seventeenth century: the people of Janos as refugees from the Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico, the Chiricahuas as migrants. In the low-yield environment of the Southwestern Borderlands adequate resources required a large territory for subsistence, even with the small populations of both communities. Further, the low population of both communities meant they especially required a critical resource: people, particularly women and children. Chiricahuas and Janeros therefore made their communities

throughout the first half of the eighteenth century by incorporating the original indigenous populations and their territories via parallel processes of “Apache-ization” and “Hispanic-ization.”<sup>44</sup> Violence dominated these processes since both communities were incorporating the same populations in the same territory, including each other’s.

In borderland communities that lived under the threat of violence, such as Chiricahua and Janos, families preferred that their daughters marry men who could not only provide for a wife but also protect her. For the young men of both communities—as it was they who were inclined to greater risk taking to acquire a wife and establish their place in life—violence provided the opportunity to do both, even at the risk of losing their lives.<sup>45</sup> During the later eighteenth century the Janos garrison continually filled its muster roll after the death of soldiers, ultimately trebling in size during a time of demographic collapse, as men sought the status and opportunities of military service—especially access to the supply system—before they sought out a marriage partner. Among Chiricahuas an increase in raiding opportunities allowed more young men to become adults and acquire the necessary material goods and status to marry. Violence also provided the means for experienced warriors to become leaders of their own groups of families. However, the responsibilities of families and leadership forced both Janeros and the Chiricahuas into closer relations.

These closer relations resulted from the creation of peace establishments at presidios, including Janos, across New Spain’s northern frontier by the end of the eighteenth century. In order to maintain the families and the status raiding had brought them, many Chiricahuas settled near Janos, reduced their violence, and were gifted with what they had previously raided for. Janeros, also wanting to keep their rank and households, accepted the nearby presence of their erstwhile enemies. While the peace establishment at Janos reduced violence, it did not and could not end the violence altogether as rivalry for rank and status within both communities continued. Since harming the community’s enemies was seen as

positive, violence continued to carry social esteem and was carefully accounted for by both communities. Violence continued to dominate the means to gain and maintain status within each community, even in a time of relative peace.<sup>46</sup> Chiricahuas and Janeros were not, however, always each other's enemies. Chiricahuas joined in Janos's campaigns against other Apaches, while the Janos soldiery fought insurgents in north-central Mexico in the counter-insurgency that led to Mexican Independence.

With independence national support for presidios and peace establishments steadily eroded. The failure to provide adequate gifts and ensure ample exchanges saw the rise of a generation of Chiricahuas who once again sought to gain position and ensure survival via ever-increasing violence. The steadily weakening garrison at Janos, joined by a growing number of armed civilians, retaliated for this violence, with the hope of eliminating the Apaches or at least establishing deterrence. From time to time Janos worked out local peace arrangements with Chiricahuas, but these rarely lasted as retaliation more often simply provoked revenge. Revenge caused more retaliation, more revenge, and even more retaliation. In the absence of any authority to enforce cooperation or separation, or at least minimize the damage, retaliation served as the only rational option for either community.<sup>47</sup> This cycle produced a "grinding, long sustained apprehension" which neither Chiricahuas nor Janeros escaped, feeding the instinctive desire to strike back; to redirect their apprehension at the first available target.<sup>48</sup> Retaliation and revenge provided "spiritual fulfillment" for both communities, re-creating the moral and psychological balance by reassuring their members that although they had been attacked, they could strike back.<sup>49</sup>

The border dividing the borderlands into the United States and Mexico did not initially change the potential for conflict between Janos and Chiricahua. Centuries of violence gave rise to endemic suspicion and insecurity, inviting not only retaliation but also preemptive strikes, in turn magnifying the mutual suspicion and insecurity between the two communities. Each community regarded the other as a potential enemy, the very existence of which posed a

threat since “they” might attack any day and destroy “us.”<sup>50</sup> This “security dilemma” meant that both Janeros and Chiricahuas, while motivated by defensive concerns, often chose to attack to eliminate or severely weaken the other. However violence, while a promising choice and often a rational act for both communities, was not the optimal one, as actions both communities took to provide security for themselves ultimately threatened their survival.<sup>51</sup> If Chiricahuas stayed on the Mexican side of the border they faced treachery and attacks. But if they crossed to the American side seeking security for their families, they could not live the way they wanted. For Janos the dilemma was different, but no less threatening to the community’s survival in the long term. The creation of the border and subsequent political turmoil in Mexico only continued the steady decrease and eventual dissolution of the Janos garrison. This made Janeros solely responsible for their own security, a development that would ultimately threaten the Mexican state.

The willingness of both the Mexican government and the United States to enforce the border by the later nineteenth century signaled the end to both Janos and Chiricahua as communities of violence. Neither the United States nor Mexico accepted the role of violence in driving relationships between the two communities. Indeed such communities of violence were the antithesis of the modern nation-state and its claim to a legitimate monopoly on the use of violence.<sup>52</sup> While the Chiricahuas’ primary foe was now the United States, their preferred opponent remained Mexican communities across the border. This situation ultimately resulted in their final imprisonment and exile. Janos moved from confronting Chiricahua to facing the expanding power of the Mexican state; ultimately by violence during the Mexican Revolution, in which ex-presidential communities such as Janos played a leading role. The finale for both communities of violence, after two centuries of violent relations, was thus predictably—but understandably—violent.

Ultimately both Chiricahua and Janos gained resources, including population and territory, from each other by violence. Both

communities increased by recruiting young men who would then become adult males via violence, gaining the status and material resources necessary to claim a wife. Violence was the means to maintain these families at Janos and Chiricahua by way of competition for rank and status. Both communities used violence to secure themselves in the face of attacks by the other by striking out in retaliation and for revenge. Finally, Chiricahua and Janos deployed violence to handle the dilemma that, regardless of what they did or did not do, they could be attacked by the other, so it was best to attack them first. Both communities stood ready to do violence to each other, a fact that allowed violence to dominate their relations in the Southwestern Borderlands through two hundred years of confrontation, conflict, and cooperation.