

Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands, 1861-1867

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Review

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Masich, Andrew E. *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands, 1861-1867.*
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The Civil War's civil wars

Civil War historiography has been well served by the recent proliferation of borderland studies. This burgeoning corner of the conflict's literature has added nuance to our understanding of emancipation, the war in Appalachia, the Confederate diaspora, the Native American experience, and the war's transnational dimensions. *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands* by Andrew E. Masich is an accessible and well-researched addition to the literature.

In this sweeping, largely narrative history, Masich argues "that cultural groups fought civil wars in the Southwest Borderlands concurrent with and connected to the American Civil War and that such wars often occur when two or more ethnically or culturally distinct peoples occupy the same space and vie for survival and dominance" (4) The war between the Union and the Confederacy created new and oftentimes more destructive conflicts in a region already burdened with long standing tension and rivalries.

At its core, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands* is a comparative study of Anglo, Hispano, and Indian martial cultures. Prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War armed conflict between these groups was characterized by raid and reprisal warfare in which the destruction of one's enemy was rarely the ultimate goal. Within this limited war tradition, Indians often emerged victorious against Anglos and Hispanos. However, after 1861 warring Union and Confederate forces introduced total war to the borderlands where Native Americans once dominated, they declined militarily. Aside from an escalation in violence, the Civil War reordered the social hierarchy of the region. Anglo-American influence in the region drastically increased while, for Indians, the Civil War years is a story of decline.

Anglo, Hispano, and Indian combatants all strove to fulfill the obligations of "martial manhood" as constructed by their respective cultures. While strategies, tactics, and motivations

varied among the three groups, Masich shows that “in all cases, alliances, accommodation, and compromises characterized the survival strategies of each cultural community” (73). A martial middle-ground existed in the borderlands during the 1860s. Alliances and compromises were both facilitated and hindered by the ethno-centrism that was ubiquitous in the southwest. “Each ethnic group,” the author argues, “feared, misunderstood, and imagined the worst of the others” (36). Indians, Hispanos, and Anglos were all willing to go to extremes to secure their own community’s security. A vicious cycle of actual and rumored atrocities and reprisals accompanied this environment of fear, chaos, internecine conflict, and ethno-centrism.

To Masich’s credit, he has authored a book that is accessible to many audiences. Traditional Civil War scholars are provided with enough contextual information to guide them through the labyrinthine ethnic and cultural conflicts occurring in the southwest while Native American and Latin American scholars will find utility in the comparisons of martial cultures. At times, the author provides an overabundance of contextual information and vignettes; some of the narrative could be expunged for the sake of concision. Much of the first chapter, for example, is dedicated to rehashing the Mexican-American War and recounting settlement patterns of various indigenous groups.

While the book would have benefited from tighter editing, Oklahoma University Press should be applauded for allowing the inclusion of lavish illustrations, charts, appendices, and a glossary—the latter of which will be especially useful for readers unfamiliar with Native American and Hispano terminology. Moreover, Masich’s research is nothing short of staggering; over a hundred pages of the volume are devoted to documentation. In addition to synthesizing a vast amount of secondary literature from multiple disciplines, the author consulted an impressive array of primary sources including the previously neglected Indian Depredation Claims Records.

Readers hoping to broaden their understanding of the Civil War beyond the storied campaigns of the Union and Confederate armies will find Masich’s volume useful. Other scholars will be enriched by the authors discussion of martial cultures and the transnational dimensions of the war. While some readers will understandably object to Masich’s expansive narration, *Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands* is a worthy addition to the conflict’s literature.

Robert L. Glaze holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is the author of numerous published essays and articles.