

Determined: A Brief History Of The Apache

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Native American history is an important aspect to the history of Northern America because each nation is unique and was formidable to the development of North American societies of today. Each area of North America were inhabited by unique nations; however, there was none as unique as the southwestern Apache. This nation was known for their determined fight against several foreign enemies such as the Spanish, Mexicans, and Americans. Their fight for land and expulsion of foreign enemies raged from the early sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The Apache are a band of Native American tribes in southwestern United States better known as Apacheria. Chiricahua, Jicarilla, and Mescalero are all major tribes, with the exception of much smaller branches within each three which form the Apache, and belong to the Athabaskan language family. Dating records and artifacts provide evidence that Apache people were living in the southwestern part of North America between 1200 and 1500 AD.¹ The Apache had significant Spanish influence for a century, and in some cases two centuries, before American colonialization of the southwest. Explorers such as Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in the early sixteenth century were some of the first non-native groups to enter the land. As Spanish presence became stronger throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Jesuit missionaries began to move across Apache land. In general, the Spanish and Jesuit influences in the southwest created intense conflicts that would continue for centuries as American settlers began to colonize the area. As fighting relentlessly occurred through the southwest, the Apache

¹ Susan A. Roberts and Calvin A. Roberts, *a History of New Mexico*, University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

Wars, Geronimo's final defeat, and the forced removal of the Apache were three major turning points for the nation.

Among the Apache are made up of several small tribes, each with distinctions that separate one another, but all share common themes that collectively join them together. The Chiricahua tribe its name meaning 'the red paint people' lived on land west of the Rio Grande and conjoined with the Mescalero Apache. Spanish explorers in the Chiricahua territory in the early sixteenth century did not write about a native population; therefore, it has been theorized by historians that the Chiricahua did not inhabit the territory until the mid to late sixteenth century. Throughout the seventeenth century, Spanish explorers, and Jesuit priests made numerous attempts to remove the Chiricahua from their territory. Primarily, Jesuits were the most aggressive towards the Chiricahua such as Fray Juan Miguel Menchero. As the gold rush of the early nineteenth century captivated men searching for riches moved across Chiricahua land, Tensions rose between Chiricahuas and settlers, causing the construction of nine forts in New Mexico between 1846 and 1855.¹ A band living in close proximity and who shared territory with the Apache were the Mescalero Apache.

Residing west of the Pecos River, like the Apache, the Mescalero depended on hunting and gathering. The Mescalero territory went as far south as northwestern Texas and northern Mexico, making the mountain ranges in the area a form of protection and defense. The Mescalero had heavy Spanish influence from Spanish exploration in the sixteenth century. Father Alonso de Benavides discovered the territory in the seventeenth century, named the land Jornada del Muerto, and referred to the Mescalero as de Perrillo. As Spanish exploration continued, the Mescalero fell victim to slave trafficking that occurred for over two centuries. The Spanish Slave Trade in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was caused by the Spanish needing slaves to mine the silver deposits found in central Mexico. When the mines were being fully excavated by slave labor, tribes such as the Utes began to slave trade with the Spanish.

1 William C. Sturtevant and Alfonso Ortiz, *Handbook of North American Indians*. 401-403, 1983, Vol. 10, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Eventually the Spanish and French slave trades began to overlap with one another scattering tribes, like the Mescalero, around the southern half of North America.¹ The pressure of slave trading did not ease tensions and escalated Mescalero raids against the Spanish. Throughout the seventeenth century Mescalero villages were repeatedly attacked mainly out of retaliation for Spanish losses. In 1793 a treaty was signed for the Spanish to give land from El Paso to the Sacramento Mountains back to the Mescalero. This treaty seemed to lighten tensions between the Mescalero and Spanish; however, there were still small raids through the nineteenth century. As American settlers began to settle in the southwest, the Mescalero would continue to fight for territory.² The Mescalero were not the only band to fight the migration of settlers, the nearby Jicarilla not only fought against settlers, but the nearby Comanche.

Along the southern end of Colorado into northern New Mexico distinguish Jicarilla territory, an Apache band that were also first encountered by the Spanish. The environment where the Jicarilla resided allowed for them to practice agriculture; however, did rely on hunting and gathering. This band was first discovered by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1541 who observed them hunting high numbers of buffalo. It was not until 1595 when the territory was settled by Juan de Onate when Jicarilla were influenced by missionaries. Into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Jicarilla were slowly being pressured out of their territory by Comanche Indians which caused the Jicarilla to migrate south. This caused rising tension between the two native nations, inevitably beginning the Comanche-Jicarilla wars between 1730 and 1750. These wars were turbulent and caused the Jicarilla to move territories frequently up until the nineteenth century, where Mexican land grants took and gave land to the Jicarilla. Eventually Jicarilla lands came under United States rule in 1848; however, like the other Apache tribes, American colonization of the

1 Colin G. Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

2 Sturtevant and Ortiz, 419-423.

southwest would create further tension.¹ One of these tensions that would shape the Apache would be the Apache Wars.

A nearly twenty year period encapsulated the Apache Wars, from 1849 to 1886 Apache Indians and United States Cavalry after Mexico surrendered territory at the end of the Mexican-American War.² This turning point would ultimately drive a permanent wedge between the Apache and United States and would later decide the outcome for the Apache. The addition of new territory brought new American citizens to the southwest who were expanding agricultural and mining occupations on what was traditionally Apache land. As tensions rose between Apache Indians and United States citizens fighting began in 1849 marking the beginning of the Apache Wars. From the intensity of these wars several forts were constructed and treaties signed to attempt to tame the onslaught of Indian attacks. The treaties written were repeatedly broken, in some cases by the Apache leaders who signed them, which created cause for the United States to declare war on the Apache. These wars have been broken up into groups for history to understand them easily: Jicarilla War, Chiricahua Wars, Texas Indian Wars, Yavapai Wars, Victorio's War, and Geronimo's War. Beginning the Apache Wars in 1849, was the Jicarilla War which lasted until 1855. Conflicts began after raids against United States citizens on the Santa Fe Trail. A specific event, the White Massacre, in 1849 officially began the Jicarilla War. This massacre resulted in the deaths of settlers in New Mexico at the hands of Jicarilla Apache, after this massacre it did not take the United States until 1853 to become involved.³ Though a smaller war than the others, the Jicarilla war would continue to fuel tensions that would ultimately be the beginning of a long, and violent conflict between the Apache and United States.

In 1851, Mangas Coloradas, an Apache chief, was kidnapped by a group of miners, and severely beaten. Coloradas' beating would

ignite another round of tensions between the Apaches and settlers. One year after Coloradas' beating he signed a treaty in Santa Fe which stated in Article 1, "Said nation or tribe of Indians through their authorized Chiefs aforesaid do hereby acknowledge and declare that they are lawfully and exclusively under the laws, jurisdiction, and government of the United States of America, and to its power and authority they do hereby submit," and in Article 2, "From and after the signing of this Treaty hostilities between the contracting parties shall forever cease, and perpetual peace and amity shall forever exist between said Indians and the Government and people of the United States; the said nation, or tribe of Indians, hereby binding themselves most solemnly never to associate."¹ Though created with good intentions, the signing of this treaty created a shortly-lived peace between the Apache and the United States settlers.

Ten years after Coloradas' beating he, and another Apache chief, Cochise agreed to push all Mexican and American settlers out of Apache territory. The battles that followed would later become known as the Chiricahua Wars. The two chiefs believed they were receiving the upper-hand in some battles; however, the beginning of the American Civil War began to determine the outcome of battles. The fighting was in direct offense of the treaty signed in 1852, immediately putting Mangas Coloradas as a target for the United States. In 1863 Mangas Coloradas agreed to speak with United States Cavalry at Fort McLane under truce; however, was taken into custody upon his arrival. Soon after, the Apache chief was tortured, and executed. Coloradas' execution intensified relations between Apache Indians and United States settlers and would propel further battles in the Apache Wars.² Between the Chiricahua War and Geronimo's War, Apache battles are grouped together by smaller wars which began through massacres, raids, and kidnappings.

On November 25, 1864 the Battle of Adobe Falls was fought in the Texas Indian Wars. Lt. Carson led nearly four hundred service-men and Ute men into battle where they met a massive army of

1 Sturtevant and Ortiz, 440-451.

2 Dan L Thrapp, *the Conquest of Apacheria*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1967.

3 Veronica E Tiller, *the Jicarilla Apache Tribe: A History, 1846-1970*, University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

1 *Treaty with the Apache*, Santa Fe. July 1, 1852.

2 Calloway, 350.

Comanche, Kiowa, and Plains Apache.¹ The beginning of the Yavapai War in 1871 was the result of another massacre, known as the Camp Brant Massacre. A group of Americans, Mexicans, and Papago warriors, attacked the camp killing over a hundred Apache men, women, and children.² The Apache Wars were an extended period of time which consisted of fierce fighting between the Apache and United States Calvary and would ultimately lead to the Apache removal period.

One of the most prominent turning points for the Apache people was the forced removal and placement at San Carlos reservation in Arizona. The removal in the West began in the 1820s into the 1830s after failure to assimilate nations into American lifestyle, this forced placement at San Carlos was particularly difficult for most because the climate of Arizona was an environment that several of the bands were not accustomed to. A fierce resistance by Apache war leaders and chiefs raged for several years; however, American Calvary met the resistance with an equal ferocity. The Arizona territory at San Carlos was where most Apache bands were placed in a reservation. Life at San Carlos was extremely difficult for the tribes who were placed there and several died of malaria. Daklugie lived on this reservation as a child and described a life of living in unbearable heat, no vegetation other than cacti, and undrinkable water. Daklugie continues his testimony regarding the reservation stating, "It was a good place for the Apaches – a good place for them to die." The lifestyle at the San Carlos reservation was unbearable, historian Colin Calloway attests that Apaches preferred a death in battle than an agonizingly slow death at San Carlos. Apache war leader, Victorio eventually led his people away from the reservation in 1877 stating, "I will not go to San Carlos. I will not take my people there. We prefer to die in our own land under the tall cool pines. We will leave our bones with those of our people. It is better to die fighting than to starve." Victorio fought for the Apache until the end of his life three years after running from San Carlos. After being driven to the Mexican border by American troops, Victorio was killed in 1880 in Chihuahua against a

1 George H Pettis, "Kit Carson's fight with the Comanche and Kiowa Indians at the Adobe Walls on the Canadian River, November 25th, 1864." (1878).

2 Calloway, 350.

battle with Mexicans and Tarahumara Indians.¹ Victorio's passionate will to fight for the Apache people was not the single attempt made by an Apache leader. There was Geronimo and his band of eighteen fighters led General Nelson Miles on a chase through the southwest, and it would be Geronimo's defeat that would signal the end to the Apache's defeat.²

In his memoir, Lieutenant Faison describes the intense chase to capture the Chiricahua Apache, Geronimo. He wrote that Calvary were stationed at every waterhole along the Mexican border, waiting for Geronimo if he tried to enter into Mexico. The chase was intense and often frustrating for United States Calvary. From Faison's memoir, he wrote about coming across victims of Geronimo's who would often be surprised by sneak attacks, "We found the body of one soldier reclining against a tree with a piece of bacon protruding from his lips, a tin cup about half full of coffee still raised in his hand as if to drink."³ In September of 1886, Geronimo and his Chiricahua fighters surrendered to General Nelson Miles, and were eventually sent to Fort Pickens in Florida. Though Geronimo fought for the wellbeing of the Apache people, the Chiricahua did not support Geronimo or the war he was fighting against the United States. While at Fort Pickens, the Chiricahua were not accustomed to the damp climate, and many died of illness. The Chiricahua were eventually relocated to Alabama; however, surviving Chiricahua were sent to Kiowa and Comanche Reservations in 1894. A treaty signed in 1867 stated,

The said Apache tribe of Indians agree to confederate and become incorporated with the said Kiowa and Comanche Indians, and to accept as their permanent home the reservation described in the aforesaid treaty with said Kiowa and Comanche tribes, concluded as aforesaid at this place, and they pledge themselves to

1 Calloway, 350.

2 Ibid, 351.

3 Edward K Faison, "Lieutenant Faison's Account of the Geronimo Campaign," *Journal of the Southwest* 54 (3): 521-44, 2012.

make no permanent settlement at any place, nor on any lands, outside of said reservation.¹

This treaty, though taking several years to integrate, would set the future for the Apache living in the southwest. The great Apache war leader whose defeat signaled the defeat for the Apache people and Geronimo would follow his people from Florida to the new integrated territory. Geronimo died within this integrated territory in 1909 from illness. It was not until 1913 when the surviving Chiricahua were permitted to return to the southwest where many of them joined the Mescalero in New Mexico. Colin Calloway states that, "With the Apaches' defeat, American military conquest of the West was complete."²

For centuries the Apache fought against the Spanish, the Mexicans, and eventually having no choice but to surrender to the United States. Their fierce and passionate fight to reclaim their homelands were routinely blocked by treaties which were broken several times by Apache leaders such as Mangas Coloradas, Cochise, Victorio, and lastly – Geronimo. The Apache Wars were a prolonged and complex series of wars that were fought for the same intentions to rid American settlers from the southwest. These wars would ultimately force the government to relocate the Apache to the inhabitable San Carlos reservation. Geronimo, who would escape from the reservation multiple time, would continue a guerilla war campaign that would led United States Calvary on a chase through the southwest. The surrender of Geronimo would signal the overall surrender of the Apache to the United States government. The Apache Wars, Apache removal period, and Geronimo's defeat were all notable turning points for the Apache people.

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2 Calloway, 351-352.

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