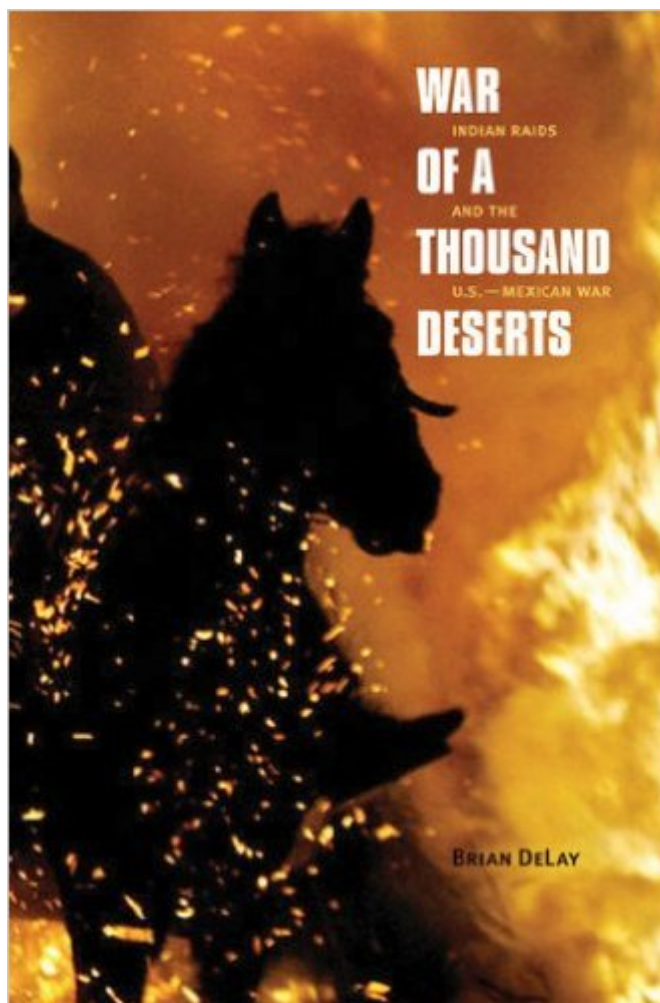


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War Of A Thousand Deserts (The Lamar Series In Western History)



Synopsis

In the early 1830s, after decades of relative peace, northern Mexicans and the Indians whom they called "the barbarians" descended into a terrifying cycle of violence. For the next fifteen years, owing in part to changes unleashed by American expansion, Indian warriors launched devastating attacks across ten Mexican states. Raids and counter-raids claimed thousands of lives, ruined much of northern Mexico's economy, depopulated its countryside, and left man-made "deserts" in place of thriving settlements. Just as important, this vast interethnic war informed and emboldened U.S. arguments in favor of seizing Mexican territory while leaving northern Mexicans too divided, exhausted, and distracted to resist the American invasion and subsequent occupation. Exploring Mexican, American, and Indian sources ranging from diplomatic correspondence and congressional debates to captivity narratives and plains Indians' pictorial calendars, *War of a Thousand Deserts* recovers the surprising and previously unrecognized ways in which economic, cultural, and political developments within native communities affected nineteenth-century nation-states. In the process this ambitious book offers a rich and often harrowing new narrative of the era when the United States seized half of Mexico's national territory.

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Customer Reviews

The description above is from a Mexican official, Jose Maria Sanchez, writing in 1830 about the North Americans flooding into Texas (then a Mexican state). Manuel Mier y Teran also noted the North Americans' contempt for Mexican laws and refusal to learn the language. The Mexicans clearly saw the threat to their sovereignty, and outlawed immigration from the north. However, the Mexicans were unable to stop the eventuality they clearly foresaw. The Mexican North was a "thousand deserts", laid waste by Comanche raids, terrifying attacks of up to 1,000 warriors who could travel 100 miles a day. Roiling internal politics and a poor economy meant that Mexico did not protect its north from the norteamericano or Indian menaces. American and Mexican willingness to turn a blind eye to buying branded animals created a ready market for stolen livestock. The next time I hear someone extolling Indian simplicity and virtue, I will grit my teeth. The Comanches were renowned for their gratuitous cruelty and devotion to vengeance and retribution, leaving behind "bellowing farm animals dragging their guts behind them", slaughtered noncombatants, some burned alive, and wholesale destruction of grain stocks and wells poisoned with corpses. Because Texans appear to have matched Comanches for ferocity, most of these raids were directed into the Mexico, even as far south as San Luis Potosi and Tamaulipas, victimizing people who were no conceivable threat. Warriors would engage in a scorched earth campaign (as opposed to merely efficiently stealing animals) even when this put them in danger by giving defenders time to organize. There was plenty to seek vengeance for.

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