



Cultural Construction of Empire: The U.S. Army in Arizona and New Mexico

Janne Lahti

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From 1866 through 1886, the U.S. Army occupied southern Arizona and New Mexico in an attempt to claim it for settlement by Americans. Through a postcolonial lens, Janne Lahti examines the army, its officers, their wives, and the enlisted men as agents of an American empire whose mission was to serve as a group of colonizers engaged in ideological as well as military, conquest.

Cultural Construction of Empire explores the cultural and social representations of Native Americans, Hispanics, and frontiersmen constructed by the officers, enlisted men, and their dependents. By differentiating themselves from these “less civilized” groups, white military settlers engaged various cultural processes and practices to accrue and exercise power over colonized peoples and places for the sake of creating a more “civilized” environment for other settlers. Considering issues of class, place, and white ethnicity, Lahti shows that the army’s construction of empire took place not on the battlefield alone but also in representations of and social interactions in and among colonial places, peoples, settlements, and events, and in the domestic realm and daily life inside the army villages.

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