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## Review of *Mangas Coloradas: Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches* By Edwin R. Sweeney

H. Henrietta Stockel  
*Cochise College*

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*Mangas Coloradas: Chief of the Chiricahua Apaches.* By Edwin R. Sweeney. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. xxiii + 578 pp. \$34.95.

Inch by inch Sweeney drags readers through the military life and times of one of the Chiricahua Apaches' most noted leaders—Mangas Coloradas. With certain exceptions noted below, the author describes what quite possibly was every major event in this famous chief's life from cradle to grave. Here briefly are stories of his youth, the Native customs applied to children, the activities and the lessons all Chiricahua children learn in growing up. Here too are descriptions of later battles led by Mangas Coloradas and fought in two countries, the attempts to make peace, the successes and failures of those arrangements, and the frustrations on all sides.

Sweeney's research has uncovered names, names, names, producing a virtual who's who among the Chiricahua Apaches and the Spanish and American military on the frontier of the 1800s. Speaking of names, Sweeney concludes that an Apache named El Fuerte by the Spanish later became Mangas Coloradas. Although he won't be seriously challenged on

this designation, there was more than one El Fuerte on the Spanish frontier, as indicated by information indexed at the Arizona State Museum. In particular, Spanish military officers in the Sonora of the 1700s recorded one Apache warrior's name as El Calvo Fuerte. Was this also the same man as Mangas Coloradas? It's a curious point that doesn't really matter here, for this is a book of battles, not names, and the actions all swirl around Mangas Coloradas. Rightly so, for without question this biography spotlights one individual only; everyone else occupies a supporting role.

Sweeney's richly detailed description of the military aspects of this Chiricahua Apache chief's life conveys the impression that few Indians were comparable, either in authority or personal power. He did the same in his previous book about Cochise who, not incidentally, was Mangas Coloradas's son-in-law. Perhaps one day Sweeney will produce a third work comparing the two so that readers might learn the author's preference, if he has one. As it stands, it is difficult to find the author anywhere in the thousands of words he has written in this particular volume. The distance between Sweeney and his subject is palpable, often painful, particularly in his frequent use of the adjective "bellicose" to describe the Chiricahuas. Yes, they were that, but they were much more, and Sweeney resists feeling or sensing the complete picture of Mangas Coloradas's Apaches and then portraying them fully through his diction. After all, besides being "bellicose," the chief and his people were also husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, uncles, aunts, sisters, daughters, mothers, and wives who led lives that included more than the battles Sweeney relates. For example, while Mangas Coloradas was a chief and a respected strategist, he was also the husband and father who, as a tired warrior, had to come back from battle to his family. Who were they and what was that aspect of his life like? Sweeney doesn't elaborate. Had he interviewed Mangas Coloradas's contemporary descendants, they might have added another dimension to this

work and possibly helped him present a picture of the total man, not just the renowned fighter. Sadly, the author devotes only a short paragraph of nine lines at the very end of his book to the chief's heirs without mentioning their names. That's too bad, for some of them are today's Chiricahua Apache leaders and others are accomplished in various walks of life. They deserve recognition.

Nonetheless, although this exhaustively thorough book is clearly not written for casual and general readers, it should interest a select audience of history buffs, aficionados, and serious scholars of Chiricahua Apache history and culture. A true test will be its appeal to the Chiricahua Apaches themselves.

H. HENRIETTA STOCKEL  
Center for Southwest Studies and Research  
Cochise College, Sierra Vista, Arizona