society may inspire deeper research into the success and contestations over freehold agriculture in Iowa.

A Big History of North America does contain a few flaws. The organization of the book may discourage some readers. The two-chapter prologue essentially pushes readers through a divided 50-page introduction. Further, since the arguments for social development rely on significant amounts of data on GDP, literacy, and mortality, the narrative often gets lost in paragraphs of data. Converting that data into easy to digest visualizations would have gone a long way in streamlining the analysis. With that said, *A Big History of North America* provides an important contribution to encourage historians to think bigger and consider North America as a singular whole.

Dawn's Light Woman & Nicolas Franchomme: Marriage and Law in the Illinois Country, by Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon K. Person. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2022. xi, 243 pp. Illustrations, maps, diagrams, notes, index. $27.50 softcover.

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In this sleek volume, readers will find much that is new and useful, and Carl J. Ekberg and Sharon K. Person demonstrate why they remain the doyens of the Illinois Country and its history. The authors provide an excellent summary of the early history of the Illinois Country in the opening chapters. The remaining text is largely devoted to a legal case concerning an inheritance that engulfed the lives of several Native and French residents in the village of Kaskaskia in 1723. Through this case, the complexities and intricacies of the development of the legal culture of the Illinois Country emerge. The inventories of household goods produced by the legal magistrates illustrate the changing nature of the region during the early eighteenth century, when the cultivation of wheat slowly replaced the fur trade. As the agricultural economy blossomed, African slaves subsequently took on greater importance (and larger numbers) than the Native persons held as chattel. The published and annotated 1726 census of the Illinois Country toward the end of the book provides a rich illustration of these trends.

The principal focus of the book is Marguerite 8assecam8c8e (Dawn's Light Woman), an Illinois Native woman who married three French husbands in succession. Jacques Bourdon, her first husband, had

been previously married to another Illinois woman, Domitile Ch8ping8eta, who had a son, Pierre Baillergeon, from a previous marriage to Antoine Baillergeon. When Bourdon died in 1723, he left his fortune to Marguerite, but Baillergeon argued that the bulk of Bourdon's estate had come from his mother Domitile, Bourdon's first wife. Thus, Pierre Baillergeon initiated legal proceedings to gain a greater share of Marguerite's inheritance. By that time, Marguerite was remarried to a young French marine officer, Nicolas Franchomme, who, citing the French customary law, the *Coutume de Paris*, argued that his new wife was the rightful possessor of the fortune received from her first husband and not Pierre Baillergeon. The Illinois Provincial Council took up the case and decided in Franchomme's favor. The case had several important implications. First, it established the *Coutume de Paris* as the foundation of the law in the Illinois Country. Second, according to Ekberg and Person, "Native American wives in the community were guaranteed the same inheritance rights as French wives" (4).

If the book examined only the convoluted twists and turns of the legal case, it would be interesting enough; however, Ekberg and Person use the rich documentation produced during the proceedings to shine light on various aspects of the society and culture in the Illinois Country. Along the way, they cite the principal historical works on the history of the region, and this makes their book an outstanding introduction for novices not familiar with the voluminous scholarship concerning the Illinois Country. The citations also reference the many important archival collections one must consult to research the history of the region. Ekberg and Person add great value to this work by publishing the full text of the 1726 census for the Illinois Country, a document they have carefully—and extensively—annotated with many other records in the endnotes section. The 1726 census makes the world of Marguerite 8assecam8c8e and Nicolas Franchomme come alive and stands as an exceptional reference source for both historians and genealogists.

While this book will be much welcomed by scholars of the Illinois Country and the Illinois Indians, it may be of less utility for students of Iowa history. Of course, this is no fault of the authors, as the present-day state of Iowa was never an integral part of the Illinois Country. Nevertheless, for students of the history of the Midwest, it is a valuable addition as it clarifies a great deal about the custom of Indian-White marriage and the status of Native women in French colonial law. These contributions make this book a valuable addition to the canon of midwestern history.