

Book Reviews and Notices

Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains, by Theodore Binnema. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. xvi, 288 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Joseph Key is assistant professor of history at Arkansas State University. His dissertation was "'Masters of This Country': The Quapaws and Environmental Change in Arkansas, 1673-1833" (University of Arkansas, 2001).

The avalanche of Lewis and Clark studies in the past few years has threatened to overwhelm the historiography of the North American West. Theodore Binnema rescues us with a monograph that gives more depth and breadth to the history of the northern plains.

Binnema has drawn upon anthropological and ethnohistorical research on Plains Indian societies—those of the northwestern plains, in particular—to create a new interpretation of the history of northwestern plains peoples before 1806. In Binnema's hands, the history of the northwestern plains is a story of communities and interethnic bands, not of tribes. Communities were created from the frequent encounters of bands on the northwestern plains. Building on those communities and bands, larger interethnic coalitions were formed. *Coalition* rather than *alliance*, Binnema argues, is the better term because it connotes the fluidity and temporary nature of native communities on the northwestern plains. Bands and relations among individuals, Binnema finds, were the driving force in the native history of the northwestern plains. Increasingly, historians such as Binnema are looking to the myriad relationships and communities built in North America and how they shaped regional and continental history.

Binnema also joins a growing number of historians who are focusing on peoples within regions. Doing this, he and others are able to reveal the subtleties of interactions between humans and the environment. Beginning with the first chapter, Binnema explains the environment of the northwestern plains, and he places in a larger context the impact created by the arrival of new groups and the introduction of new resources. So it was when more people began to stream onto the plains and when they began to acquire guns and horses. Much like the ecological revolution Carolyn Merchant describes for New England, guns and horses dramatically reconfigured life on the northwestern plains.

As happened throughout the plains, some groups on the northwestern plains controlled the horse trade, others the gun trade. That situation was reflected in the band and ethnic coalitions in the region. In the eighteenth century, a southern coalition of Crows, Shoshones, Flatheads, and Kutenais was rich in horses while a northern coalition of Blackfoot, Gros Ventres, Sarcees, and Crees was rich in guns. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the coalitions were under increasing stress and changing affiliations. Warfare increased, and the Gros Ventres were caught in the middle until the creation of three new coalitions: northern, central, and southern. The southern coalition (Crows, Shoshones, Flatheads, and Kutenais) on the Columbia and Missouri rivers was forming at the time Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery passed through. The Corps signaled the arrival of greater numbers of competing Canadian and American traders in the region after 1806.

Binnema focuses much of his discussion of guns and horses on the changes they created in warfare and diplomacy. He notes that warfare was an important part of life on the plains, but it increased after 1700 with the arrival of guns and horses and more people. Interestingly, he refers to rock art, a type of text under-utilized by historians, to show native peoples' own depictions of warfare during the pedestrian (pre-horse) and equestrian (post-horse) eras, as he calls them. This is just one example of the way he draws on the archeological record to inform the history of native peoples.

Binnema's well-written and extensively researched narrative of northwestern plains history is a valuable addition to the history of North America.

The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations, by Guy Gibbon. The Peoples of America Series. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. xii, 311 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.95 cloth.

Reviewer Herbert T. Hoover is professor of history at the University of South Dakota. He is the author of several books and articles about the Sioux.

A reputable anthropologist with a specialty in archeology presents a survey evidently restricted to approximately 200 pages of text by guidelines for Blackwell's The Peoples of America Series regarding Native American societies scattered across the Western Hemisphere. The book is not a history as much as a description of cultural themes in the history of the Sioux federation of tribes from its prehistory to the outset of the twenty-first century—with an emphasis on the Minnesota experience. The author characterizes the book as "not a 'grand narrative' written by an 'authority'" (xi), but as a provocative analysis

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