

Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power. By Pekka Hämäläinen (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2019). Pp. 544. Hardcover, \$35.00.

Pekka Hämäläinen's *Lakota America* elevates Lakota history to the forefront of North American history, arguing that just as there was "Spanish, French, British, and the United States of America, there was Lakota America" (3). Hämäläinen primarily focuses on the diplomatic, military, and economic strategies that Lakotas utilized from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries to prevent Euro-American incursions into their interests, grow the size of their domains, and increase their hegemony. Despite his previous contributions to the historiographical debates on frontiers, borderlands, and middle ground theories, Hämäläinen offers a more targeted interpretation of Lakota-U.S. relationships in this work. He argues that while Americans' western march in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both "overlapped and interpenetrated" with Lakota domains, the two sides coexisted for two generations, where "neither Lakotas nor Americans compromised their core convictions about themselves and the world" (6-7). It was only when Lakotas' cultural and commercial interests were threatened due to competition over buffalo herds, and when white colonizers continued intruding into Lakota territory, that "coexistence became impossible" (7).

Hämäläinen begins by tracing indigenous migrations north following Cahokia's decline in the centuries prior to European colonization. From there, Lakotas and their Dakota, Yankton, and Yanktonai kin were just a few among many groups vying for resources south and west of the Great Lakes. In order to become one of the dominant North American powers, Lakotas transformed their landscapes, practices, and identities multiple times to take advantage of the changing opportunities around them. To start, Dakota connections to French trade networks in the seventeenth century pushed western-facing Lakotas into the heart of the continent in search of valuable pelts and furs. When the French turned their attention eastward in response to English aggressions in the early eighteenth century, the seven oyátes of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (the peoples of the Seven Council Fires, otherwise referred to as the Sioux) shifted west towards the plentiful resources with which Lakotas were already familiarized. New home fronts between the Missouri and Mississippi River valleys then provided the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ both easier access to tradeable resources, as well as secure spaces to remain unified during a period of unprecedented geographic expansion toward Pahá Sápa (the Black Hills). The maps Hämäläinen developed with cartographer Bill Nelson are particularly helpful for examining some of these shifting relationships and movements over time.

Much akin to the subjects of Hämäläinen's previous monograph, *The Comanche Empire*, Lakotas' increasingly equestrian-backed mobility transformed them into an "Indigenous empire" that protected their communities across the vast plains, doing what "capitals, bureaucracies, and standing armies did for sedentary empires" (207, 205). By the 1790s "a Lakota barrier" that many traders "did not know existed" had developed along the plains (103-4). For almost a century afterwards Lakotas' "specter-like menace" acted as a near impenetrable impediment to Euro-American incursions, doing "more to undermine the Jeffersonian vision" than any other indigenous nation (140-141). The core of the monograph then features a detailed analysis of what made the Lakota and American empires tick, with Hämäläinen diving deep into the mid-nineteenth century tensions and treaties between the two.

He portrays Americans as obsessed with the lines on maps that delineated geospatial control. Lakotas, meanwhile, focused on their recognized hunting rights across those lines, legitimating their access to resources while guaranteeing them future opportunities to expand. Conflict over these different worldviews eventually ensued. While Hämäläinen includes the ways the different bands within the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ submitted to U.S. colonization in the nineteenth century, the concluding chapters largely emphasize the ‘non-treaty’ Lakotas—like Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and their followers—who continued resisting American military incursions and federal attempts to force treaties on Lakotas following the Civil War.

Hämäläinen’s range of sources is impressive, and his regular incorporation of indigenous winter counts to document or reflect on historical developments is particularly valuable. The counts log the previous year’s important events, capturing victories and losses, war and peace, famine and plenty, and more. Additionally—and, central to Hämäläinen’s argument—the counts also capture important transformations in Lakota culture over time, such as their developing equestrianism and their westward expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (90, 124). The end of the monograph likewise details the Lakotas’ oft-depressed state at the end of the nineteenth century, when winter counts were most often “a record of Indigenous dispossession, dysfunction, and subjugation, and of colonialism working exactly as intended” (380). Despite these important inclusions of indigenous perspectives, not everyone is equally represented.

Although Yale University Press’s marketing of this detail-rich text as both the “The first comprehensive” and “complete account of the Lakota Indians,” the thirteen-page epilogue’s summarization of the past hundred and thirty years feels lacking. Readers of Jeffrey Ostler’s shorter, decade-old synthesis, *The Lakotas and the Black Hills*, might feel like they understand more of Lakotas’ current geo-political struggles (Dustjacket). Similarly, though Hämäläinen claims “this book is decidedly a history of the Lakotas, written from sources that seek to convey their perspective, often in their own words,” it is disappointing that more of those perspectives are not female ones (8). While he mentions women about once every ten pages, these are usually passing references to their domestic and reproductive roles, framing women most often as amorphous individuals without personality or agency. The only extended analysis of Lakota women’s role comes less than halfway through the book, when Hämäläinen details women’s decreased prestige following the increase in polygyny in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (180-183). Despite the author’s focus throughout on transformations, his continued preferencing of men’s personalities, voices, and actions from the twentieth century onward is problematic, as it overlooks women’s contemporary transformations.

While Hämäläinen’s more than one-hundred pages of endnotes are wonderfully thorough, those interested in learning more should review the wide variety of available resources that feature or prioritize indigenous women, including monographs like *White Mother to a Dark Race*, autobiographies like those of Madonna Swann and Mary Crow Dog, documentaries like *Warrior Women* and *Young Lakota*, and databases like the Carlisle Indian School Digital

Resource Center.¹ Hämäläinen's focus on the American Indian Movement—the most publicly visible and violent wing of Red Power—is also problematic given that it aligns with an historiographical fixation (as noted by Daniel Cobb and Bradley Shreve) on AIM and the 1970s.² While Hämäläinen briefly singles out Vine Deloria, Jr.'s intellectual contributions to Red Power, Deloria's was only one contributing voice—albeit, a very important one—to decades of intertribal work done by Indians who formulated various strategies and philosophies on how indigenous peoples should fight for their rights. Connecting to recent events, the fact that Hämäläinen only spends about a page examining the indigenous responses to the Dakota Access Pipeline crisis only adds further weight to this critique.

This brevity at the tail-end of the work, however, does not exclude all that came before. Given Hämäläinen's creative syntheses and meticulously constructed analysis, *Lakota America* will likely remain the definitive study of Lakota history for quite some time.

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¹ See Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Christina King and Elizabeth Castle, dirs., 2019, *Warrior Women*, ITVS; Marion Lipschultz and Rose Rosenblatt, dirs., 2013, *Young Lakota*, PBS; Waidner-Spahr Library, Dickinson College, The Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, <http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/>; Madonna Swann and Mark St. Pierre, *Madonna Swan: A Lakota Woman's Story* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1990).

² See Daniel Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 2, and the introduction to Bradley Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).