



Borderlands, Cultural Exchanges, and New Native Societies

Borderlands history came into being as an effort to see the world anew. In a sense, it shows us how to squint, how to deflect the blinding light of empires and nations as embodiments of history in order to see what lies hidden behind them. Borderlands history looks at how ordinary peoples have defied, negotiated, and eluded the attempts of larger entities to control their lives and how they have carved out distinct social spaces amidst empires and nations—or across imperial or national boundaries. Borderlands history is therefore inherently concerned with the intimate and culturally specific dimensions of human interactions. It tends to look at history through a local lens, focusing on the actions and experiences of individuals and small groups, fringe peoples at the edges of empires, nations, and cultures.

Yet borderlands history is not just about face-to-face relationships and local dynamics. Because in borderlands central powers exert limited control over human interactions, borderlands often become sites for unexpected alliances, political innovation, and cultural reinvention, the repercussions of which can reverberate far and wide. Examples of borderlands spawning far-reaching historical changes abound. The momentous shift in New Spain's Indian policy in the 1760s and 1770s towards the "French model" of conciliation, exchange, and gifting has often been seen as the result of the ambitious reforms emanating from the Royal Palace in Madrid, but the policy shift was pioneered and tested by innovative frontier officials in New Mexico and elsewhere a generation before the crown institutionalized it. The Seven Years' War (1754–63) began at the contested borderlands of the Ohio Valley, where the French, British, and Indians had vied for power for generations, and from there it spread over three continents, becoming the first global war. Borderland conflicts could become international conflicts, but the pacification of borderlands could be equally consequential. When peace brought diverse peoples into closer contact through trade, diplomacy, and intermarriage, it created propitious conditions for viruses to jump hosts and trigger epidemics that could devastate previously unexposed native societies across vast distances. And borderlands also influenced the birth of other borderlands. When people moved to new locations, they carried with them their accumulated knowledge of intercultural

dialogue, and when they encountered new peoples in new environments, they tried to apply the practices that had worked before. North American borderlands were rarely created afresh; they were built on prior experiences and expectations.

In early America, hard colonial frontiers often softened into porous borderlands of cross-cultural exchange and accommodation where imperial authority was sometimes eclipsed by indigenous power. Yet throughout North America colonial outposts profoundly transformed native societies by introducing new diseases, technologies, markets, and ideas. This chapter examines the various ways in which European contact reshaped native cultures, focusing on technological and biological exchanges (especially horses and firearms) and intermarriage. But the chapter also turns the lens around by asking how the new native societies influenced colonial outposts.

DOCUMENTS

The first document is a traditional Cheyenne story of the moment when foreign traders first brought horses to Cheyenne villages. Deeply impressed by the animals, Cheyennes asked Maheo, All-Father Creator, for horses of their own. Maheo granted their wish but also warned that their lives would be changed forever. Maheo's warning reveals some of the complexities of horse adoption and offers clues about how Cheyennes came to regard their choice. In the second document, Saukamappee, an elderly Cree Indian living among the Piegan Blackfoot Indians, relates the Blackfeet's first encounter with horses, guns, and smallpox around 1730. The account, recorded in 1787 by fur trader David Thompson, illuminates how Indians reacted to new technology and diseases and how their prior experience with dogs may have facilitated the adoption of horses. The account also suggests how the introduction of horses and guns changed native warfare.

Documents 3 and 4 illuminate the changes in Native American power relations that came with the rise of equestrianism. In Document 3, the Marqués de Rubí, a Spanish officer who toured New Spain's northern provinces in 1766–68, recommends a new Indian policy for the Texas and New Mexico borderlands. For decades, Spain had maintained an on-and-off alliance with the various Apache groups of the southern Plains against the expanding Comanche Indians, but Rubí advocated an alliance with the Comanches and possible extermination of the Apaches. His rationale for the policy change reveals how Spaniards tried to protect the borderlands and sheds light on Spanish attitudes toward Indians and alliances with Indians. The next document reveals what happened when two expanding frontiers of European technology intersected. While native trade networks shuffled horses northward across the Great Plains, other indigenous channels moved guns southward from Canadian trading posts in the plains-woodlands borderlands. The two technological frontiers converged in the upper Missouri Valley in the late eighteenth century, plunging the region into wars over trading privileges. Some native groups were marginalized, while others came to dominate multiple trade channels and won secure access to both guns and horses. Charles McKenzie, a Canadian fur trader in the service of the North West Company, visited the upper Missouri River in 1805. In Document 4, McKenzie

describes the dynamics that turned the Mandan and Hidatsa Indian villages into great trading bazaars. His account also illuminates the challenges European fur traders faced when trying to enter into native-controlled exchange networks.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the northern Great Plains emerged as the focal point of the North American fur trade as both British Canadian and U.S. companies extended their operations there. The Hudson's Bay Company, the American Fur Company, and others maintained numerous trading posts along the region's major river valleys, incorporating several native societies into the fur trade. The last two documents—excerpts from the diaries of fur traders Rudolph Friedrich Kurz and Francis Chardon—shed light on cross-cultural accommodations, gender relations, and the roles of native women in the context of the northern plains fur trade. Together, the documents describe how intermarriage between native women and fur traders supported trade relations and how native women became involved in nearly all facets of the fur trade as mediators, cultural transmitters, producers, consumers, and companions. They offer glimpses into the intimate domestic dynamics of fur trade marriages and show how native women carved out personal social places in the male-dominated trading posts. The documents also illuminate how Euro-American traders struggled to understand, navigate, and modify native customs, and they bespeak of the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. Chardon's journal also contains references to the devastating 1837–38 smallpox epidemic that spread across the northern plains, killing thousands of Indians and changing the chemistry of Indian-Euro-American relations in the region.

1. Maheo, All-Father Creator, Warns the Cheyennes about Life with Horses

Maheo was the one who made the world and the people and animals and wind and stars. He was the one who brought the light and divided night from day. Maheo, the All Spirit, watched over his people, the Cheyenne, and taught them everything.

One day the Comanches came to see the Cheyennes. The Comanches were riding on horses. "Wah! That is wonderful," said the Cheyennes. "Where do you get them?"

"From the Pueblos," the Comanches said. "They have lots of horses."

"What do you trade for them?" asked the Cheyennes. Their own women made many pretty things, decorated with earth paints and porcupine quills that they dyed with the earth colors and berry juices, but they knew the Comanches did not do that kind of work.

"Trade for them!" said the Comanches, laughing. "We don't trade for them. We just go and take them."

"Don't the Pueblos get angry?" asked the Cheyennes.

"Oh, they don't like it very much, but they're too afraid to go out of their houses to come and get them back."

"We never heard of horses," said one Cheyenne priest. "Perhaps Maheo wouldn't like for us to have them."

"Why don't you ask him?" a Comanche said. "We'll trade with you, if you're too afraid to go and get them."

The Cheyennes knew that was true because the Comanches enjoyed taking great risks. They were gamblers, who were always looking for things to put at stake in their lives or their games.

The Cheyenne priests all gathered in the largest house in the village, which was the medicine lodge, and they sat and smoked and prayed to Maheo, fasting, for four days. At last Maheo took pity on them, and spoke to them through the oldest priest.

"You may have horses," Maheo said. "You may even go with the Comanches and take them. But remember this: If you have horses everything will be changed for you forever.

"You will have to move around a lot to find pasture for your horses. You will have to give up gardening and live by hunting and gathering, like the Comanches. And you will have to come out of your earth houses and live in tents. I will tell your women how to make them, and how to decorate them.

And there will be other changes. You will have to have fights with other tribes, who will want your pasture land or the places where you hunt. You will have to have real soldiers, who can protect the people. Think, before you decide."

The priests sat and smoked and thought another four days. Then the oldest one said, "Maheo, we think we can learn the things you can teach us and our women. We will take the horses, and with your guidance we will learn the new life."

"So be it," said Maheo. "But you must never forget where you came from or who you are. Once a year you must make a lodge in the shape of an earth lodge, and in it you must pray and dance and smoke and sing. It will be your offering of your own flesh and blood in my honor."

All the priests agreed. Then Maheo said, "I will give the power of this dance to the oldest of you, and he can pass it on. But because women are the mothers of life, as I am the father of everything, it must be passed through a woman. On the third night of the dance, the priest must take the wife of a man who is making offering into a special tipi, set aside, and lie with her. Then she will lie with her husband, and the power will be passed through her body to his."

2. Saukamappée (Cree) Recalls the Arrival of Horses, Guns, and Smallpox to the Northern Plains, 1787

The Peeagans [Piegans] were always the frontier Tribe, and upon whom the Snake [Shoshone] Indians made their attacks, these latter were very numerous,

even without their allies; and the Peeagans had to send messengers among us to procure help. Two of them came to the camp of my father, and I was then about his age (pointing to a Lad of about sixteen years) he promised to come and bring some of his people, the Nahathaways with him, for I am myself of that people, and not of those with whom I am [living now]. My father brought about twenty warriors with him. There were a few guns amongst us, but very little ammunition, and they were left to hunt for the families; Our weapons was a Lance, mostly pointed with iron, some few of stone, A Bow and a quiver of Arrows; the Bows were of Larch, the length came to the chin; the quiver had about fifty arrows, of which ten had iron points, the others were headed with stone. He carried his knife on his breast and his axe in his belt. Such was my fathers weapons, and those with him had much the same weapons. I had a Bow and Arrows and a knife, of which I was very proud. We came to the Peeagans and their allies. They were camped in the Plains on the left bank of the River (the north side) and were a great many. We were feasted, a great War Tent was made, and a few days passed in speeches, feasting and dances. A war chief was elected by the chiefs, and we got ready to march. When we had crossed and numbered our men, we were about 350 warriors (this he showed by counting every finger to be ten, and holding up both hands three times and then one hand) they had their scouts out, and came to meet us. Both parties made a great show of their numbers, and I thought that they were more numerous than ourselves.

After some singing and dancing, they sat down on the ground, and placed their large shields before them, which covered them: We did the same, but our shields were not so many, and some of our shields had to shelter two men. Theirs were all placed touching each other; their Bows were not so long as ours, but of better wood, and the back covered with the sinews of the Bisons which made them very elastic, and their arrows went a long way and whizzed about us as balls do from guns. They were all headed with a sharp, smooth, black stone (flint) which broke when it struck anything. Our iron headed arrows did not go through their shields, but stuck in them; On both sides several were wounded, but none lay on the ground; and night put an end to the battle, without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other.... I grew to be a man, became a skilfull and fortunate hunter, and my relations procured me a Wife. She was young and handsome and we were fond of each other. We had passed a winter together, when Messengers came from our allies to claim assistance.

By this time the affairs of both parties had much changed; we had more guns and iron headed arrows than before; but our enemies the Snake Indians and their allies had Misstutum (Big Dogs, that is Horses) on which they rode, swift as the Deer, on which they dashed at the Peeagans, and with their stone Pukamoggan knocked them on the head, and they had thus lost several of their best men. This news we did not well comprehend and it alarmed us, for we had no idea of Horses and could not make out what they were. When we came to our allies, the great War Tent [was made] with speeches, feasting and dances as before; and

when the War Chief had viewed us all it was found between us and the Stone Indians we had ten guns and each of us about thirty balls, and powder for the war, and we were considered the strength of the battle. After a few days march our scouts brought us word that the enemy was near in a large war party, but had no Horses with them, for at that time they had very few of them. When we came to meet each other, as usual, each displayed their numbers, weapons and shiel[d]s, in all which they were superior to us, except our guns which were not shown, but kept in their leathern cases, and if we had shown [them], they would have taken them for long clubs.

The War Chief was close to us, anxious to see the effect of our guns. The lines were too far asunder for us to make a sure shot, and we requested him to close the line to about sixty yards, which was gradually done, and lying flat on the ground behind the shields, we watched our opportunity when they drew their bows to shoot at us, their bodies were then exposed and each of us, as opportunity offered, fired with deadly aim, and either killed, or severely wounded, every one we aimed at.

The next morning the War Chief made a speech, praising their bravery, and telling them to make a large War Tent to commemorate their victory, to which they directly set to work and by noon it was finished.

After all the war ceremonies were over, we pitched away in large camps with the woman and children on the frontier of the Snake Indian country, hunting the Bison and Red Deer which were numerous, and we were anxious to see a horse of which we had heard so much. At last, as the leaves were falling we heard that one was killed by an arrow shot into his belly, but the Snake Indian that rode him, got away; numbers of us went to see him, and we all admired him, he put us in mind of a Stag that had lost his horns; and we did not know what name to give him. But as he was a slave to Man, like the dog, which carried our things; he was named the Big Dog.

The terror of that battle and of our guns has prevented any more general battles, and our wars have since been carried by ambuscade and surprise, of small camps, in which we have greatly the advantage, from the Guns, arrow shods of iron, long knives, flat bayonets and axes from the Traders.

While we have these weapons, the Snake Indians have none, but what few they sometimes take from one of our small camps which they have destroyed, and they have no Traders among them. We continued to advance through the fine plains to the Stag [Red Deer] River when death came over us all, and swept away more than half of us by the Small pox, of which we knew nothing until it brought death among us. We caught it from the Snake Indians. Our Scouts were out for our security, when some returned and informed us of a considerable camp which was too large to attack and something very suspicious about it; from a high knowl they had a good view of the camp, but saw none of the men hunting, or going about; there were a few Horses, but no one came to them, and a herd of Bisons [were] feeding close to the camp with other herds near. Next morning at the dawn of day, we attacked the Tents, and with our sharp flat daggers and knives, cut through the tents and entered for the fight; but our war whoop instantly stopt, our eyes were appalled with terror; there

was no one to fight with but the dead and the dying, each a mass of corruption. We did not touch them, but left the tents, and held a council on what was to be done. We all thought the Bad Spirit had made himself master of the camp and destroyed them. It was agreed to take some of the best of the tents, and any other plunder that was clean and good, which we did, and also took away the few Horses they had, and returned to our camp.

The second day after this dreadful disease broke out in our camp, and spread from one tent to another as if the Bad Spirit carried it. We had no belief that one Man could give it to another, any more than a wounded Man could give his wound to another. We did not suffer so much as those that were near the river, into which they rushed and died. We had only a little brook, and about one third of us died, but in some of the other camps there were tents in which every one died. When at length it left us, and we moved about to find our people, it was no longer with the song and the dance; but with tears, shrieks, and howlings of despair for those who would never return to us. What little we could spare we offered to the Bad Spirit to let us alone and go to our enemies. To the Good Spirit we offered feathers, branches of trees, and sweet smelling grass. Our hearts were low and dejected, and we shall never be again the same people.

3. The Marqués de Rubí Recommends the Extermination of the Apaches, 1768

The enemies who present themselves at this location [Rio Grande Valley] are now of a very different character, and the terrain is of a better nature for the cavalry of our presidios. We should consider as our frontier neighbors and transborder counterparts from here on, as far as the point set on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, only the perfidious Lipan Apaches, who have been emboldened by our own credulity and the shameful indulgence with which we have treated their frequent attempts [at mischief] and insults.

Of these [Lipanes], those who live toward the Santa Rosa Range, on the upper bank of the Río del Norte, generally join together with the Natagés [Apache] for their incursions into Vizcaya and the haciendas of Coahuila. They are well acquainted with the country because of the liberty with which they are allowed to enter it under the pretext of their apparent peace with this government. Those who are next to them, downstream on both banks of the river, at San Vicente, San Rodrigo, San Marcos, and several other extended banks where springs are found in greater or lesser abundance, overrun the scarce population and the encampments near the new town of San Fernando de Austria. Nor do they pardon the abundant haciendas of Sardinias, Cuatro Ciénegas, and others, penetrating to the interior toward the Sabinas and perhaps the Nadadores Rivers.

Always following the course of this river, more or less close to its banks, extend many other villages of this same nation and language, with the various names of

their leaders and petty chiefs such as Boruca, Zapato Bordado (Embroidered Shoe), Casaca Colorada (Red Jacket), Cavezón (Big Head), Canos, and others that change as new chiefs come to power. The profession of thieves constitutes the character of this depraved nation—which subsists on the flesh of horses and mules, preferring this over all other foods—and has made them likewise abhorrent to all the others, who have continued pressing in on them, fighting them, and destroying them, from the most unknown distances of the North. There is a tradition of the Lipanes once having lived in the North, and a little later in the Fort that the Taguayás [Taovayas] now occupy, two hundred leagues from the vicinity they now inhabit on the Rio Grande. From here, under the shadow of our inconvenient mercy, and the shelter of the presidios constructed in their sight, they have sheltered themselves from the pursuit of their innumerable enemies.

Yet, they have not for that reason stopped laying waste, like housebreakers, to our own possession of San Antonio de Béxar and its most opulent missions, those of the Rio Grande, the encampments of Laredo, and as much as exists in their vicinity. They have occasioned also the much graver danger of drawing to our frontiers—attracted by their irreconcilable hate for them—the northern nations: the Comanches, Iscanis, Taguacanas, Taguayas, etc., innumerable, war-like, armed with rifles, and until now little known. Now these nations not only daily attack San Sabá, irritated by our unfortunate alliance with the Lipanes, but also the imaginary mission of El Cañón, the town of San Antonio, and much farther into the interior. They have established their villages and encampments with daring confidence on the Alarcón, Guadalupe, Janes, Trancas, and San Sabá Rivers, bordering on our settlements, which are weak, ill-placed, and incapable—because of their internal discord—of making opposition to a torrent of enemies who in reality are appreciable in strength and in number.

This brief sketch of the damages and expenses which, both by themselves and indirectly, the infidel Lipanes have caused to the possessions and treasury of the King, spoon-feeding us with their deceitful friendship and supposed desire to be reduced and made into a never-realized congregation, makes me take into consideration the remediation of such an urgent danger. I may well be deceived by the desire for their chastening and punishment. It is, surely, the only means of attracting them to any side—be it to religion or to the state—but I confess that to me what I am now proposing seems simple and sure.

With this vile nation—incapable of resisting our presidios in an open war—walled in between our frontier and their enemy Nations of the North, it will suffer a war before and behind it, which it cannot sustain; and the [war] parties will find themselves forced to allow that which their illustrious evil will make inevitably known to them. While the Comanches and their allies finish them off, which will not be difficult for them, it is probable that they [the Lipanes] will seek asylum in our missions and presidios; but this should not be conceded to them except at the cost of moving them far to the interior and dividing them, extinguishing or confusing them (as has occurred with several other nations whose [barbarous] legacy has perished from memory), [for they are] a nation whose sagacity, rapacity, and industry will be always unfortunate and indecorous to the progress of the arms of the King and to the tranquility of his possessions.

We shall have, it is undeniable, one day the Nations of the North as neighbors; they already are approaching us now. But these, whose generosity and bravery make them quite worthy of being our enemies, perhaps will not be [our enemies], as those of our new colony of Louisiana are not, nor those of our present Presidio of Los Adaes, who have more proximity. [Those] of San Xavier were not [our enemies], nor do they show themselves as such in New Mexico, where they come annually to the Valley of Taos to celebrate their feasts with us. Capable of some formality in their dealings, they have what is necessary to know how to observe [amicable relations]. Removed from the proximity of the hated Lipanes, who plunder them as they do us, they shall live (thus I judge it) tranquilly in their true dominions—without crossing over to our frontiers—and shall enjoy their peaceful possession of the bison hunt, which is their whole sustenance, cultivation, and ambition.

These advantages (with which I do not know how to stop enchanting myself) make me consider as necessary the total extermination of the Lipanes, or at least their complete reduction in terms which would make impossible the effects, so many times experienced, of their constant fickleness—dealing at the same time with the location of the presidio which is next to that of Santa Rosa, namely San Juan Bautista de Río Grande. Even if one wanted to transfer [the latter] more toward the bank of this river, to a spot where it would uncover and dominate to a greater extent its many routes and fordable passes, the transfer would not amount to even one league from its present location, which is at the corresponding latitude.

4. Charles McKenzie Describes Horse and Gun Trade on the Northern Plains, 1805

About the middle of June the Rocky Mountain Indians [Crows] made their appearance. They consisted of more than three hundred Tents, and presented the handsomest sight that one could imagine—all on horseback. Children of small size were lashed to the Saddles, and those above the age of six could manage a horse—the women had wooden Saddles—most of the men had none. There were a great many horses for the baggage, and the whole exceeding two thousand covered a large space of ground and had the appearance of an army; they halted on a rising ground behind the Village; formed into a circle—when the Chief addressed them, they then descended full speed—rode through the Village, exhibiting their dexterity in horsemanship in a thousand shapes—I was astonished to see their agility and address:—and I could believe they were the best riders in the world. They were dressed in leather, looked clean and neat—Some wore beads and rings as ornaments. Their arms were Bows and arrows, Lances, and round stones enclosed in leather and slung to a shank in the form of a whip. They make use of shields, and they have a few Guns.—

W. Raynond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, eds., *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 245-247. Reprinted by permission.

On the following day the Missouri Indians [Mandans and Hidatsas] dressed in their best fineries returned the compliment by a similar exhibition. These having the advantage of residing in the vicinity of trading Establishments were better provided with necessaries and consequently had a more warlike appearance; but they were inferior in the management of their horses.—

In the mean time *Le Borgne* [Mandan chief] sent for us in order to introduce Mr. La Roque to the Rocky Mountain Chief, whose name in *Nakesinia* or Red Calf. When we offered to shake hands with this great man, he did not understand the intention, and stood motionless until he was informed that shaking hands was the sign of friendship among white men:—then he stretched forth both his hands to receive ours. *Le Borgne* said a great deal in favor of the North West Company, but he did not praise the Americans.

Mr. La Roque's great pipe was handed round as a precious offering and each took a few whiffs—then Mr. La Roque presented to the Red Calf a Flag; a Stem, with some mercantile articles; and the Chief to testify his Sense of the obligation adopted Mr. La Roque as Father, and promised to respect and consider him as such for ever after.

Les Gros Ventres [Hidatsas] made the Corbeaux [Crows] (for so the Rocky Mountain tribe was called) Smoke the pipe of friendship, and at the same time laid before them a present consisting of two hundred guns, with one hundred rounds of ammunition for each, a hundred bushels of Indian Corn, a certain quantity of mercantile articles, such as Kettles, axes, Cloths &c. The Corbeaux in return brought two hundred and fifty horses, large parcels of Buffalo Robes, Leather Leggins, Shirts &c.

This exchange of trading civilities took place dancing—when the dancing was over, the presents were distributed among the Individuals in proportion to the value of the articles respectively furnished—this dance therefore is a rule of traffic. The Mandane Villages exchanged similar civilities with the Same Tribe. It is incredible the great quantity of merchandize which the Missouri Indians have accumulated by intercourse with Indians that visit them from the vicinity of Commercial Establishments.—

This unpleasant disagreement [over La Roque's intention to visit the Crow Indians] caused a bustle in the Camp, and most of the Indians collected around us—finding this a favourable opportunity, the Great Chief, our friend *Le Borgne*, addressed the Indians and his adopted Son the Red Calf as follows:—

“My Son and my friends, rejoice—White men are to visit your Land and you will feel easy in their company—but we shall regret their absence. White men are curious—they came from far—they know much and wish to learn more. Three only form their party; Your party consist of a thousand and more—you see their skin, it is white—their hearts are as white as their skin—they are good and will do you no harm. Give them plenty to eat; let them have the best, and be the first served—let your women be kind to them—never ask anything from them: they are generous, and they will pay you for your kindness—White men love Beaver and they are continually in search of Beaver for its Skin—What use they make of the Skin I know not:—but they give us good things in return—they exchange it for Guns, Ammunitions &c.

Our Fathers were not acquainted with White men—We live better than our Fathers lived.

5. Rudolph Friedrich Kurz on Gifts, Intermarriage, and the Fur Trade

Cree are said to be most valiant warriors, excellent marksmen with the rifle, but very cautious and pertinacious in trade. Assiniboin excel in shooting with bow and arrow (but it must be taken into consideration that they get fewer good rifles from Americans than the former receive from the English). "Indians at this post place little value on us whites," says the bourgeois [Denig].

They maintain that we are capable of doing just anything for the sake of getting buffalo robes—we lie, we cheat, we work in the dirt even, just as their wives do. We are poor people who could not exist without them, because we must have buffalo robes or we should perish from cold. To impress them, therefore, on our part, we think it best to assume a proud, reserved attitude, to act as though we take no notice of them, and refuse to imitate them either in dress or manner. The instant we should seek them, treat them in an intimate free-handed manner, they would only believe that we were courting their friendship for the sake of protection, and accordingly would give them a more exalted idea of their importance and a more significant proof of our own helplessness. In that event we should have to pay dearly for their friendship and their so-called defense, for there would be no limit to their demands. Among themselves, Indians value liberality, "largesse," very highly as a virtue; in consequence every gift is designated, even as a "coup," on the buffalo robe. But generosity on the part of a paleface wins neither their friendship nor their respect. They do not look upon a white person as one of themselves or as a recognized friend; his liberality shows his dependence; he seeks protection. The paleface owns no land; he is obliged to get permission to found his fort, to trade with the native race; and he is required to pay formal tribute for the privilege. Accordingly, if one presented an Indian with a gift every day in the year—this morning, a horse; tomorrow, a gun; the day after tomorrow, a blanket; the next day, a knife; and so on until the last day in the year—and then might forget or simply neglect to give him anything at all on the 365th day, he would be all the more angry on account of the omission. The same is true of an Indian woman; the more one gives her to win her good will, all the more convinced is she that the donor is in her power. She does not respect him, much less love him; only treats him kindly for the sake of the gifts. An Indian woman must fear her husband; she then esteems him for his manliness. She desires a warrior—no good-natured pantaloon. Therefore several sound lashings or other rough treatment is necessary from time to time to keep alive her respect and affection. Besides, an Indian woman loves her white husband only for what he possesses—because she works less hard, eats better food, is

allowed to dress and adorn herself in a better way—of real love there is no question. After the third or fourth child, when they are getting too old for their Indian dandies, they begin to devote themselves entirely to the father of their children. If an Indian woman runs away, one is not to pay the least attention to her nor to show the least grief; one is to forget her. To go after her, to beg her to return, is beneath the dignity of a brave—is not considered to be worth while.

Men in charge of trading posts like to marry into prominent Indian families when they are able to do so; by such a connection they increase their adherents, their patronage is extended, and they make correspondingly larger profits. Their Indian relatives remain loyal and trade with no other company. They have the further advantage of being constantly informed through their association with the former as to the demands of trade and the villiage or even the tent where they can immediately find buffalo robes stored away. For a clerk a woman of rank is too expensive and brings him no advantage, for the reason that he is employed at a fixed salary and receives no further profit. If he falls into debt he is brought under obligation to the company.

6. Francis Chardon Records Relations between Fur Traders and Native Women and a Smallpox Epidemic in the Upper Missouri River, 1836–1839

[May 5, 1835]—Started out at Day-light to hunt Buffaloe—Discovered a bande at 10 A.M—Run them at 12—Killed three, started for Home at 3 P.M.—and arrived at 9—found my family increased to one more Boy—the Mandans started out to dry Meat—

[July 15, 1835]—Went to the Medicine dance last Night—Came back late and got a whipping from my Wife for my bad behaviour—

[Aug. 30, 1836]—Set the Men a chopping fire wood—The Cerimony for crying, and cutting, for the *Dead*, was performed at the Village to day—Men, Women and Children, bellowing like so many Bedlamites, the Mandans arrived with fresh Meat—Committed fortification to day and got a Whipping from my beloved *Wife*, for my trouble—Oh poor Me—the Cerimony at the Village continued all day—

[Aug. 31, 1836]—As for Durant he is a poor *Devil*, Make the best of him, as he cannot for his life leave his *squaw*—for fear of some one running away with her

[Sep. 16, 1836]—The Saons [Cheyennes] left here early this Morning for their Camp—Sent with them a Yancton woman that I bought from the Gros-Ventres, Council with the Rees [Arikaras] gave them a small present of Powder, Ball and tobacco—in the name of the Agent—Sent Bullé up to the Gros-Ventres after Robes—Durant started out Beaver hunting—

[Jan. 27, 1837]—Pleasant day, the Mandans discovered the tracks of enemies on the opposite side, supposed to be about twenty, to day a young Mandan came, either with the intent to Kill or scare Me. I left him approach in graspe length, when I disarmed him of his gun and Tomahawk, and sent him back to the Village with his tail between his legs. My Woman and her child being at the Village (at a dance) Prevented me from strikeing him to the earth. No doubt it is better as it is.

[May 8, 1837]—My hunters arrived late last Night without Meat, haveing been pillaged by the Assinneboines of four horses, they were attacked early in the morning of the 6th by a War party of fourty, Who fired on them (Mistaken them for Mandans,) and unfortunately Killed N. Durant—a free hunter Who has been in his Country several Years, his wife left the Fort this Morning, to take up her quarters in the Village. She appears to not care much about it. What affectionate Wives We all have in this Country!

[April 24, 1837]—The Mandans that crossed the River the 20th inst arrived to day with plenty of Meat—report cattle far off, and scarce. My Childrens Mother died this day at 11 OClock—Sent her down in a canoe, to be entered at Fort Pierre, in the Lands of her Parents—Pressed Packs 15—Trade going on slow—

[July 26, 1837]—The Rees and Mandans all arrived to day well loaded with Meat, Mitchel also arrived with 150 pieces. The 4 Bears (Mandan) has caught the small pox, and got crazy and has disappeared from camp—he arrived here in the afternoon—The Indians of the Little Village all arrived in the evening well loaded with dried Meat—the small pox has broke out among them, several has died,

Speech of the 4 Bears a Mandan Warrior
to the Arricarees and Mandans, 30th July 1837—

My Friends one and all, Listen to what I have to say—Ever since I can remember, I have loved the Whites, I have lived With them ever since I was a Boy, and to the best of my Knowledge, I have never Wronged a White Man, on the Contrary, I have always Protected them from the insults of Others, Which they cannot deny. The 4 Bears never saw a White Man hungry, but what he gave him to eat, Drink, and a Buffaloe skin to sleep on, in time of Need. I was always ready to die for them, Which they cannot deny. I have done every thing that a red Skin could do for them, and how have they repaid it! With ingratitude! I have Never Called a White Man a Dog, but to day, I do Pronounce them to be a set of Black harted Dogs, they have deceived Me, them that I always considered as Brothers, has turned Out to be My Worst enemies. I have been in Many Battles, and often Wounded, but the Wounds of My enemies I exhalt in, but to day I am Wounded, and by Whom, by those same White Dogs that I have always Considered, and treated as Brothers. I do not fear *Death* my friends. You Know it, but to *die* with my face rotten, that even the Wolves will shrink with horror at seeing Me, and say to themselves, that is the 4 Bears the Friend of the Whites—

Listen well what I have to say, as it will be the last time you will hear Me. think of your Wives, Children, Brothers, Sisters, Friends, and in fact all that you

hold dear, are all Dead, or Dying, with their faces all rotten, caused by those dogs the whites, think of all that My friends, and rise all together and Not leave one of them alive. The 4 Bears will act his Part—

[Aug. 22, 1837]—Cool pleasant weather. The disease still Keeps ahead 8 and 10 die off daily, Thirty five Mandans [Men] have died, the Women and children I Keep no account of—Several Mandans have came back to remain in the Village. One of my Soldiers—(Ree) died to day—Two young Mandans shot themselves this Morning—News from the Little Village, that the disease is getting worse and worse every day, it is now two months that it broke out—A Ree that has the small pox, and thinking that he was going to die, approached near his wife, a young woman of 19—and struck her in the head with his tomahawk, with the intent to Kill her, that she might go with him in the Other World—she is badly wounded, a few Minutes after he cut his throat, a report is in Circulation, that they intend to fire the Fort—Stationed guards in the Bastion.

[March 24, 1838]—Trade brisk to day—the water fell several feet. Garreau turned his Wife off for infidelity, poor thing—

[May 18, 1838]—Last Night just after I had got to bed, I herd an alarm, of to Arms, to Arms, and all the Indians of the Village a Yelling and shouting. I seized My gun and rushed out, the Night being dark we could Not discover our enemies, who had fled, after firing in one of the Lodges, and Killing one of the principal cheifs (The long Horn)—and Wounding an other in two places—A large piece of ice passed in the river—Separated from My dear Ree Wife, after a Marriage of one Year.

[June 15, 1838] haveing lived for two Months a single life, and could not stand it any longer, I concluded to day, to buy myself a Wife, a young Virgin of 15—which cost \$150—

[June 25, 1838] after an absence of 39 Days My Absent Wife thought that she fared better at the Fort, made her appearance, after a few reproaches on both sides, harmony was restored.

[Aug. 3, 1838]—Left camp early and arrived at the Fort at 10 A.M.—found all Well, except my beloved Ree wife, who has deserted my bed & board, the Indians all left Yesterday, to Make dried Meat. Finished haulaing hay at the little river 30 loads.

[Oct. 27, 1838] Old Charboneau, an old Man of 80, took to himself and others a young Wife, a young Assinneboine of 14, a Prisoner that was taken in the fight of this summer, and bought by me of the Rees, the young Men of the Fort, and tow rees, gave to the Old Man a splendid *Chàrivèree*, the Drums, pans, Kittles &c Beating; guns firing &c. The Old gentleman gave a feast to the Men, and a glass of grog—and went to bed with his young wife, with the intention of doing his best—The two Indians who had never saw the like before, were under the apprehension that we were for Killing of them, and sneaked off—

[Oct. 30, 1838]—Started up to the Gros Ventre Camp, about four Miles above the Rees. I was well received by them also, had a talk with the Principal Cheifs and Warriors, they have all promised to behave well. They presented me

with a quantity of fresh and dried Meat, and told me that their Harts were all good, and friendly disposed towards the Whites, that this time last year, they were all fools, and talked bad, that they had lost a great Many of their tribe by the small Pox, and that it was the Whites that gave them the disease, but since that time they have Killed a great many of their enemies, and that their harts were good, & that they would show by their future Conduct that they would do their best to please me. I slept at their Camp that Night—

[Nov. 17, 1838]—Gave a good Whipping to my young Wife, the first since our union, as I am united to one, that I stole from my Friend, J. Halsey, on my visit to Fort Pierre last summer—

[Jan. 24, 1839]—One Fox and one wolf Started out to ~~run~~ a band of Cows on the hill. Killed one fat Cow—Gave a whipping to my beloved wife, for not mending my Moccasins

[Feb. 28, 1839] I have traded since the departure of the Steam Boat last summer 2500 Buffalo Robes, Beaver, Otter, Wolf and Fox—and stole a young Wife, which you have been apprised of before. As yet we agree very well together. I suppose on account of haveing no young Bucks near the Fort. However, spring is advancing and Numbers will flock in before long and then, Poor White Man, take care of your *Ribs!*

Killed 41 Rats this Month—3479

20 Wolves

14 Foxes

ESSAYS

These essays examine cultural exchanges in borderlands and explore how new ideas and innovations can spread, transforming societies and cultures far beyond their points of introduction. The first essay, by Sylvia Van Kirk, professor emerita of history at the University of Toronto, explores a central borderlands institution: interracial marriage. Van Kirk offers a panoramic overview of marriages between Indians and Europeans in colonial Canada over two centuries. She traces how the French and the Indians forged the practice in the seventeenth century, how that practice became a crucial component of the fur trade, and how it changed after New France was absorbed into the British Empire in 1763. Intermarriage, she shows, transformed native societies, facilitated cross-cultural interactions, and, eventually, paved the way for the expansion of European markets and colonialism. Besides illuminating how intermarriage sustained larger processes of cross-cultural collaboration, Van Kirk's essay also raises important questions about the role of native women in the making—and unmaking—of cross-cultural arrangements. Were native women mere tools in a male-dominated world, or did they have agency of their own? Is it possible that they were at once victimized and empowered by the institution of intermarriage? How did intermarriage shape European views of native women—and men—and how did those views change over time?

In the second essay, Pekka Hämäläinen, professor of history at the University of California at Santa Barbara, shows how the introduction of Spanish horses to the Southwest borderlands transformed native societies and their relationships with colonial powers. Spanish horses triggered an equestrian revolution that swept across the Great Plains and spawned an indigenous empire that eventually turned the tables on European colonialism in the Southwest. Like Kathleen DuVal in the previous chapter, Hämäläinen depicts an Indian-European borderland in which the balance of power was tipped in the favor of the Indians. Maneuvering independently of European designs, Indians often controlled international politics and exchange in both the lower Mississippi Valley and the Southwest borderlands. But differences between the two borderlands may have been even more striking than their similarities. Consider, for example, the contrast in the distribution of power among societies, the forms and purposes of intercultural violence, and the role of the environment in shaping cross-cultural relations.

Intermarriage, Borderlands, and Power

SYLVIA VAN KIRK

Although considerable work has been done on the nature of intermarriage in fur trade society there has been little attempt to fit these patterns into the larger colonial context or to examine their legacy for settler/Aboriginal relations. This article offers a broader analytical framework and raises some of the fundamental questions that need to be asked. It argues that over the course of the colonial period, from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries, the practice of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal marriage shifts from "marrying-in" to "marrying-out." I deliberately use the term "marrying-in" to focus on the host Aboriginal societies whose homelands at the time of European contact later became Canadian territory. Especially in the fur trade context, a major impetus for such unions came from Aboriginal groups themselves. The idea was to create a socioeconomic bond that would draw the Euro-Canadian male into Native kinship networks. However, by the end of the colonial period, intermarriage had been transformed by settler society into "marrying-out." Aboriginal women lost their Indian status if they married nonstatus males. Aboriginal groups were deprived of any say in the matter and their kinship structures were ignored.

Charting the course of how this happened over several centuries raises challenging questions and demonstrates how such a study must be nuanced in terms of the intersection of race and gender. Historically much concern was expressed by colonizers over such unions because of their cultural and racial implications. The marital union of European and Aboriginal was perceived as problematic because it symbolized the mixing of irreconcilable dichotomies: civilized versus

Sylvia Van Kirk, "From 'Marrying-In' to 'Marrying-Out': Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, 3 (2002): 1-11. Reproduced with permission from the University of Nebraska Press. Copyright 2003 by Frontiers Editorial Collective.

primitive and Christian versus heathen. It must be remembered that even though such notions are discredited today, Europeans in the past were quite apprehensive about mixing with those they categorized as being of a different and lesser race and whose "degenerate" qualities they thought could be transmitted by blood. In the context of colonial Canada it also becomes apparent that the phenomenon of intermarriage was not gender neutral. In the majority of cases the union was between a Euro-Canadian *man* and an Aboriginal *woman*. This pattern has been accepted as a given while the racial and gender hierarchies that are embedded in this dynamic have not been subject to much analysis. This is starkly revealed in the rarity of the reverse union (that is, Aboriginal man married to a Euro-Canadian woman) and the negative reaction to such an occurrence.

Given the complexities of cross-cultural sexual and marital practices it is necessary to explain how I am defining "marriage" throughout this study. European commentators, especially religious ones, were quite certain that only *their* marital practices had legitimacy and were adamant that Aboriginal people adopt them. Aboriginal people, of course, thought otherwise; for them, polygamy and divorce were widely accepted concepts. In the Canadian fur trade one finds European men willing to accept or tolerate Aboriginal marital practices to an unusual extent. This becomes quite a complicated social and legal context, but it is significant that a fascinating Canadian court case in 1867 highlighted the essential components of a marital union that were adhered to in *both* Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian societies: a marriage was defined as being openly recognized and characterized by mutual consent, cohabitation, and public repute as husband and wife.

In Canada the widespread and long-lasting phenomenon of the fur trade assumes great importance in accounting for the frequency of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal marriage. This is in contrast to contexts where a settler agenda is more explicit, such as in New England for example. In Acadia and New France, fur trade and military concerns were intertwined with small-scale settlement projects, which contributes to the perception that intermarriage was more commonplace than it actually was. There is a general impression that intermarriage was widespread in New France and that Frenchmen had a natural predilection for Aboriginal women. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the French Canadian experience can be differentiated in terms of context: the settler colony along the St. Lawrence was ultimately far less enthusiastic about intermarriage than were fur traders in the hinterland. At the beginning of the colonization of New France during the early seventeenth century, it appears that intermarriage might have been a key component of French colonization policy. This stems from Champlain's famous remark, "Our young men will marry your daughters and we shall be one people," but far too much can be made of this. By the time a Crown Colony was established in 1663, it was acknowledged that intermarriage had failed to produce a stable demographic base. The new approach was to begin state-supported importation of French women, the *filles du roi*.

One of the reasons that intermarriage had failed was that French colonizers had explicitly different motives in promoting it than did their Aboriginal allies. This becomes clear in a fascinating debate about the terms of intermarriage between French Jesuits and a delegation of Huron chiefs in 1637. The Hurons

declared themselves to be favorably disposed toward intermarriage because the French traders were proving to be quite good Hurons, but they had some temporal concerns that focused on questions such as bride price and the woman's right to property and divorce. The Jesuits were shocked by these views; the Hurons had to be made to understand that the purpose of these marriages was to work in the opposite direction: "to make them like us, to give them the knowledge of the true God, ... and that the marriages ... were to be stable and perpetual." To the extent that intermarriage was to be encouraged, it was to be a vehicle for missionization and Frenchification. Only Aboriginal women who had been Christianized and introduced to a gender-role similar to that of French peasant women would make acceptable wives for French settlers. As one colonial administrator emphasized, the introduction of a new gender role was as important as religion: "One must teach them to live like villagers in France, meaning to teach them to spin, sew, knit and take care of animals." But in spite of the efforts of the Ursuline nuns, only a small number of Native women were exposed to this kind of acculturation program, and not many were interested or successfully converted. In any event, Aboriginal women would not likely have been accepted as the "founding mothers of New France." Inherent in the settler project was cultural replication: women of another culture were not really deemed appropriate to play the vital female social and reproductive roles necessary for this. Indeed, the lack of French women signals the beginning of a refrain that will be repeated on several Canadian frontiers—that *white* women are vital to a colony's demographic stability and cultural success. It does seem, however, that in this early period Aboriginal women were found unsuitable as settler's wives more on cultural grounds rather than on racial or biological grounds. If contemplated at all settler society only conceptualized intermarriage as a vehicle of "marrying-out," but such unions really did not advance the settlers' agenda or destabilize their Eurocentric conventions. From the early days of New France, it can be argued, settler society was deeply ambivalent about whether this practice should be encouraged at all.

This was not so in the fur trade, however, where very different motives were at play. One of the reasons that French colonial officials came to discourage intermarriage was that they were alarmed at the propensity of Frenchmen to "go Native." The success of the fur trade (unlike settlement) depended on intricate social and economic interactions with Aboriginal people and intermarriage very much facilitated this process. From the Aboriginal point of view, cross-cultural unions were way of integrating the Euro-Canadian stranger into Native kinship networks and enmeshing him in the reciprocal responsibilities that this entailed. The Native woman's gender role was also complementary; indeed, her work was vital to the functioning of the trade as she supplied indigenous clothing, food, and means of transportation. For well over a century, intermarriage in the vast domains of what is today Western Canada was subject to regulation by Aboriginal custom and fur trade company policies alone. Initially the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), which was founded in 1670, had tried to forbid intermarriage with Native women, but this policy soon proved unenforceable. In contrast, during the late eighteenth century the North West Company, with its headquarters in Montreal, inherited the French traders' appreciation of the benefits of intermarriage.

It was within the context of the Northwest fur trade that the indigenous (indeed, unique) marital rite known as marriage "after the custom of the country" reached its height. Only its main elements need to be summarized here. Initially fur trade marriages were most influenced by Native attitudes and customs, which included payment of a bride price and did not necessarily entail a lifetime commitment. Some HBC officers even went so far as to adopt the Aboriginal custom of polygamy, which was seen as a mark of prestige for a husband. This is not to say that all traders appreciated the reciprocal obligations they had incurred or were above exploiting what appeared to be a more open Native sexuality, but marriage "after the fashion of the country" was *the fundamental social relationship* through which a fur trade society developed. As fur trade society became more endogamous, marriage rites evolved more toward European custom. During the era of the HBC's monopoly after 1821, the company actually introduced marriage contracts that emphasized the husband's financial responsibility and the monogamous bond. But fur trade society was not autonomous. Within this specific social context, Euro-Canadian males had proved themselves adaptable to Aboriginal custom, but many felt ambivalent, and the pull of their own cultural norms remained strong. When they retreated from this fur trade world, their unions, which had not been sealed by European religious ceremony—and, by extension, their wives and families—were vulnerable to the differing attitudes of settler society, where retiring traders might renege on their commitments.

This is why the court case alluded to earlier is so intriguing. The validity of marriage "after the fashion of the country" was tested in the Canadian courts in 1867 after the death of Chief Factor William Connolly, who, upon retiring to Montreal in 1830, had repudiated his Cree wife of nearly thirty years and married a cousin according to Catholic rite. After Connolly's death the children by his Cree wife sued for what they believed was their legitimate inheritance. The transcript of the Connolly case is a fascinating source of firsthand testimony as to what constituted "the custom of the country." In a remarkably balanced judgment, Chief Justice Coram Monk ruled that William Connolly's union with the Cree Suzanne constituted a valid marriage in both cultures—on the one hand because Suzanne had been married according to the customs and usages of her own people and, on the other, because the consent of both parties, the essential element of "civilized" marriage, had been proved by twenty-eight years of repute, public acknowledgement, and cohabitation as man and wife.

Given the widespread and long-lasting nature of the fur trade in the history of Canada, one might speculate that it should have had more of an impact on settler society. The mutual interdependence inherent in fur trade relations might have provided an alternative to conflict-ridden settler/Aboriginal relations. But there is no evidence that this was so. In spite of the progressive cultural relativity shown by the chief justice, this was not the prevailing norm in the settler colonies that developed in Eastern Canada. In Upper Canada, in spite of the importance of Aboriginal allies in the early years of the colony, intermarriage does not appear to have ever been articulated by any colonial official as a useful means of securing good relations with the Indians or enhancing the demographic base of the colony. By the early nineteenth century, intermarriage was reported to be quite rare. Isolated comments

suggest that miscegenation was only a symptom of the widespread degradation of Native population, which, although relegated to the margins of colonial society, was nevertheless becoming an expensive burden for colonial administration. As a result the prospect of transferring economic responsibility from the state to a white husband became one of the few reasons advanced for sanctioning the marriage of an Aboriginal woman outside her band. The Bagot Commission, which investigated Indian affairs in the Canadas in the 1840s, noted approvingly: "The principle has been lately sanctioned by the Governor General, who has directed that no Indian woman, living, married or otherwise, with a white man shall receive presents." Both the desire to save money with regard to treaty obligations and the desire to assimilate Native people were consolidated in subsequent Indian Acts. By the Indian Act of 1869, an Indian was defined in patriarchal terms as "as any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band"; a wife's status was determined solely by that of her husband's. An Indian woman who married a non-status male legally ceased to be an Indian and lost all rights related to Indian status, as did her children. Thus, by the mid-nineteenth century, the process of intermarriage had become effectively colonized. Intermarriage was seen as a vehicle for removing Aboriginal women from their own cultures.

The patriarchal assumptions inherent in the Indian Act, however, contained a peculiar irony. Should an Euro-Canadian woman marry a status Indian, she would become an Indian! One might ask why, given their Eurocentric assumptions, settler society would permit its own women to sink to the status of Aboriginal. It seems that the likelihood of this happening was too appalling to contemplate; there is no evidence that this corollary was even discussed, much less sanctioned. Intermarriage, as we have seen, had been shaped by its own gender dynamics: there was no symmetry in the pattern of these relationships. In the process of colonization, males of the dominant society might form sexual and marital unions with subordinated females, but such men revealed little tolerance for the possibility of their own race and gender hierarchies being challenged.

It is significant that there were very few examples of an Aboriginal man marrying a Euro-Canadian woman in colonial Canada. This was not just because of demographics. Two cases from Upper Canada underscore the fact that, although the men in question were Christian and held positions of prestige, the very idea that *red* men should marry *white* women was anathema to colonial society. The first case was the marriage of Mississauga leader Peter Jones to a middle-class British woman, Eliza Field. Jones, who was also a Methodist preacher, had met his future wife when he was on a fund-raising trip to England in the early 1830s. The couple was forced to overcome severe criticism from her relatives, but they persisted, as their touching correspondence reveals, and they finally married when Field came out via New York in 1833. But instead of congratulations, they were faced with humiliating public condemnation. A scurrilous account published in the *New York Spectator* portrayed Jones as a conniving savage who had somehow managed to dupe an innocent Englishwoman, who could have had no idea of the fate that awaited her. The author decried the way in which an Indian man had transgressed racial boundaries: "We heard the Indian and herself pronounced man and wife! It was the first time we ever heard the words ...

sound hatefully.... The idea is very unpleasant with us, of such ill-sorted mixtures of colors." To Jones's great distress, the article was circulated widely in the papers in Upper Canada and, although some supporters attempted to refute these accusations, he continued to be the target of criticism and plagued by rumors that the marriage had foundered.

Similar criticism was expressed in the second case in 1859, when George Johnson, a prominent Mohawk chief of the Six Nations, married the Euro-Canadian Emily Howells. Her brother-in-law, who was an Anglican clergyman, declared, "I'll have no Indian come here after my wife's sister," and refused to acknowledge the couple for many years. While the Johnsons apparently did find some sympathetic support, it is important to probe the sense of outrage that accompanied the actions of these Aboriginal men, who were both community leaders. In these cases the fear that civilized white women would be returning to the primitive was not at issue. Both of these women were marrying into a highly acculturated Aboriginal elite. Emily Howells actually improved her living conditions; her home, "Chiefswood," on the Six Nations reserve was a Victorian mansion much superior to many Upper Canadian settlers' homes. Nor were these women's prescribed gender roles as bearers of European civilization challenged; indeed, Eliza Field was to assist her husband in his missionizing endeavors. Such marriages might have been promoted as a way of furthering assimilation, but the colonial reaction illuminates deeply-rooted anxieties about the potential threat to white male dominance in these transplanted societies. Both the Aboriginal man and the Euro-Canadian woman were deemed to be behaving inappropriately. Aboriginal men were seen to be usurping Euro-Canadian male prerogatives; and it was not acceptable for a white woman to be subordinate to an Aboriginal man. On the other hand, "whiteness" could not prevail in the person of a woman; for any man to be subordinate to a woman was unthinkable. These cases bear out the findings of historians analyzing the intersection of race and gender in other contexts. In colonizing patriarchal societies exclusive control of women goes hand in hand with the subordination of the "racial" Other, both male and female.

Nevertheless, Euro-Canadian hegemony could not be taken for granted; it had to be built. As settler society spread west, the reification of racial and gender hierarchies was used to gain control, throwing all patterns of miscegenation into disrepute. In British Columbia, the fur trade frontier was rapidly transformed into a settler colony as a result of the gold rush in the late 1850s. Given the demographic imbalance incoming white men continued to have sexual relations with Native women, although these appear to have been more transient and exploitative than they were previously during fur trade society... the colonial discourse was virulently hostile to Aboriginal people and race-mixing. Miscegenation was denounced as a "vice," and the old refrain—harkening back to the days of New France—about the necessity of importing marriageable white women was given new urgency. However, due partly to the legacy of the fur trade, which meant that several HBC/Native families were prominent in the early colonial elite, British Columbia never went as far as the new states south of the border in passing antimiscegenation laws.

In the prairie West racism and prejudice against intermarriage had been growing since the latter days of the fur trade, with the intrusion of agents of

settler society in the persons of the missionary and the Euro-Canadian woman. For the new homestead west of the prairies, with its renewed emphasis on replicating Euro-Canadian family structures, Sarah Carter has effectively shown how the Aboriginal woman was constructed as the sexually permissive Other: someone with whom Euro-Canadian males might have clandestine sex, but definitely not someone to marry. Symbolic of this hardening of colonial attitudes is another court case in 1886 that negates the judgment of the original Connolly case. In adjudication another test of marriage "after the fashion of the country," an eastern Canadian court ruled that it could *not* accept that "the cohabitation of a civilized man and a savage woman, even for a long period of time, gives rise to the presumption that they consented to be married in our sense of marriage." This represents the consolidation of the Eurocentric privileging of who gets to define what constitutes marriage. It is no accident that this coincides with the rise of racist attitudes that focus more explicitly on the degenerate consequences that were supposed to result from "the mixing of blood."

The physical legacy of fur trade intermarriage, which had produced the métis people of Western Canada, was further discredited by the North West Rebellion, which had been ruthlessly crushed by the Canadian government in 1885. Increasingly racist rhetoric condemned the product of miscegenation as degenerate. Even the highly acculturated mixed-race families of the colonial North West found their progenitors' choice of marriage partners disparaged. In the first official history of the Pacific Northwest the American historian Hubert Howe Bancroft denounced miscegenation as "the fur trader's curse." He lamented that the distinguished officers of the Hudson's Bay Company had stooped to marrying Indian and "half-breed" women, for, by doing so, "their own old Scotch, Irish and English blood would ... be greatly debased."

By the end of the colonial period the legacy of fur trade intermarriage had effectively been negated, and the place of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal marriage in Canadian society had undergone a major transformation. Because of the importance and longevity of the fur trade in the Canadian experience, it had at one time been a widespread and vital phenomenon, but settler society had always been ambivalent about its desirability, and, as Euro-Canadian patterns of settlement were solidified, intermarriage was increasingly denigrated and marginalized.

Ecological Change and Indigenous Imperialism in the Southwest Borderlands

PEKKA HÄMÄLÄINEN

The Europeans who conquered the New World liked to credit their astonishing successes to their god and their own ingenuity, but modern broad-gauge bio-histories suggest that all the conquerors often had to do was to show up and

Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (April 2010): 173–208. Reprinted by permission.

somehow stay alive; their microbes did the rest. Arriving with oceangoing ships, steel, and horses, Europeans held a decisive military edge over the Indians, yet the conquest of the Americas would have been neither as fast nor as complete without Europe's biological advantages. The biological thrust of colonization has been recognized since smallpox toppled the Aztecs—the conquistadors knew they were advancing in the wake of infectious diseases even if they spoke of divine rather than epidemiological interventions—but it was not until scholars coined such arresting macrohistorical concepts as the Columbian Exchange and ecological imperialism that biological interpretations entered the mainstream. The result was that might be called a biological turn of American colonial history. Suddenly the conquest of Native America seemed a product not so much of Europe's techno-organizational superiority as of blind biogeographic luck.

Grand, large-scale biohistories have reoriented the story of America's Europeanization, but precisely because they compress complex processes into digestible formulas, they can obscure as much as they reveal. Preoccupied with global patterns, they often distort the realities on the ground, where Europeans did not expand as a monolith and Indians did not die in the aggregate. Abstract by design, the big-picture ecohistorical models tend to suffuse history with biological determinism: European colonization becomes a mere corollary of an undeclared biological warfare, and Indians, their immunologically naive bodies but soft fodder for aggressive Old World pathogens, seem naturally selected for dispossession. History is reduced to a Darwinian process where biological encounters inexorably lead to colonial conquests, undisturbed by instances where European biota—animals, plants, pathogens—did not trigger immediate aboriginal decline and where Europeans were not the primary beneficiaries of transoceanic exchanges.

Such deterministic, flattening tendencies of macroscale biohistories have come under increasing criticism, or been sidelined, as historians have produced more complex and nuanced narratives that show how indigenous decline in the face of Europe's biological onslaught was neither immediate nor inevitable. This shift in focus has reconfigured environmental history, but it does not mean that, in efforts to avoid sweeping and deterministic generalizations, historians ought to consign environmental history to local case studies. A nascent historiographical middle ground is emerging that moves among local, regional, continental, and transoceanic perspectives and focuses on the interplay among political, economic, cultural, and biological forces. By blending environmental history, transatlantic history, borderlands history, ethnohistory, and colonial studies, historians question ossified assumptions about the potency of state power, the contours of indigenous agency, the cultural specificity of human-environment relationships, and the arrows of environmental and historical change. Just such an approach, applied to the Comanche Indians, a hunter-gatherer group of modest origins, reveals an unforeseen imperial expansion sustained by an equally unexpected ecological undercurrent.

In the eighteenth-century American Southwest and Great Plains, an imposing Comanche imperial structure arose amid European colonial outposts and in an environment that was rapidly being remade by Europe's biological exports.

Initially unsettled by European intrusions, Comanches learned to protect their bodies and homelands against dangerous Old World organisms while adopting what was useful in Europe's export package, and theirs is a story of a domineering indigenous power exploiting European exports to exploit European colonists in a world that was new for all. But to stay in power—to survive their ascendancy—Comanches had to reenvision their relationship with the natural world. They had to forge strategies to offset the ecological burdens of their political and economic expansion and, when those strategies could no longer absorb the burdens of growth in their Great Plains niche, find ways to transport these costs elsewhere. The colonial Southwest and northern Mexico were gradually drawn into the expanding Comanche sphere as raiding domain and ecological safety valves.

The rise of this Comanche-centric order and its ecological underpinnings illuminate the complex and unexpected ways in which transoceanic exchanges, biological encounters, and human ambition could intertwine to shape power relationships in early America. They form a counternarrative to conventional colonial histories by revealing a world where Indians benefited from Europe's biological expansion, safeguarded their homelands by displacing ecological burdens on colonial realms, and debilitated European imperialism with imperial aspirations of their own. It is a counternarrative that expands the scope of indigenous agency from the social to the biological sphere because it shows how Indians could determine not only the human parameters of colonial encounters but also the ecological ones. As such it is a story that may help bridge the gap that separates the declensionist narratives of American Indian environmental history from the works that emphasize the resilience of indigenous polities and cultural forms. Native survival in colonial America was often a race against ecological degradation and the loss of land and its resources. As the rise of the Comanches shows, however, the outcomes of that contest could remain undetermined for a long time.

Like many now-renowned Native American societies, the Comanches were born out of creative responses to the dangers and opportunities unleashed by European contact. In the seventeenth century, Comanches did not exist as an ethnic entity. Their parent group, the Uto-Aztecan-speaking Shoshones, lived on the central Great Plains of North America, having migrated from the Great Basin in the mid-1500s, when the plains bison proliferated under the cool and wet conditions of the Little Ice Age. Their location deep in the continent's core sheltered the Shoshones from European influences, but eventually that centrality turned their homelands into a confluence of Columbian exchanges. In the late seventeenth century, an unknown disease, possibly smallpox, reached them with devastating results: people died, kinship networks fractured, and the Shoshones split in two. One faction, carrying the name Shoshone with it, gravitated toward the dense bison populations of the northern plains . . . The other faction pushed hundreds of miles to the south, emerging in New Mexican records as Comanches. Disease may have put these proto-Comanches on the move—Indians often abandoned places infested with dangerous, unexplainable forces—yet it was another biological frontier that pulled them south. In 1680 allied Pueblo Indians banished

their Spanish overlords from New Mexico, only to fall victim to escalating raids by surrounding nomads who covered the horses that the fleeing Spaniards had left behind. The nomads traded a portion of the stolen animals to their allies, propelling the horse frontier deep into the interior where the Comanches encountered it, securing enough beasts to envision the possibilities of the equestrian way of life. Tracing the equine flow back to its source, Comanches arrived in New Mexico's borderlands sometime in the 1690s, just as the Spaniards arrived from the south to recapture the colony.

Comanches entered this world of possibility and peril cautiously. They forged an alliance with the Utes, another Uto-Aztecan group living in New Mexico's borderlands, and, guided by their new partners, added guns and metal tools to their inventory of European technology. Though embracing Spanish innovations, Comanches kept their distance from Spaniards themselves. They used Spanish horses and guns to raid neighboring Spanish and native communities for livestock and captives and then entered New Mexico's urban centers under temporary truces to barter meat and slaves for corn and horses. Interlaced with violence, such visits were by necessity brief and sporadic cross-border plunges that yielded European technology without extended exposure to European microbes. By the 1710s Comanches were raiding slaves deep on the southern plains, where their probing migration transformed into a sweeping colonization project, at the heart of which was a bitter war of attrition with the formidable Apaches.

The wars continued until mid-century, when the Comanches gained the upper hand over both the Apaches and their Spanish allies. Fully mounted, well equipped with European weaponry, and apparently untouched by major epidemics since the late seventeenth century, they were growing rapidly in numbers, their population probably nearing fifteen thousand by 1750. Meanwhile the Apaches, especially the Jicarillas, Mescaleros, and Lipans who had gradually moved toward Spanish settlement in New Mexico and Texas, faced the grim side of Columbian encounters. Spanish officials not only denied them European technology but also tried to pressure them to give up hunting and accept Christianity in the Franciscan fold even as other Spaniards conducted unrelenting slave raids into Apache villages. Pinched between the aggressively encroaching Comanche frontier and the aggressively absorptive Spanish frontier, Apaches began retreating to the desert lands near the Rio Grande. By the 1760s all Apache groups had abandoned the plains for the desert lands in southern Texas and New Mexico and northern Chihuahua.

The success of Spanish colonialism hinged on its agents' ability to prevent nonsedentary natives from accessing European weaponry, but in the far north Spaniards clashed with Comanches who rode Spanish animals to pillage Spanish animals, pierced coats of mail with iron-tipped arrows, and killed from the safety of distance with state-of-the-art flintlock muskets. Guns and metal weapons in Comanche hands shocked the colonists, yet it was horses, and the way the Comanches used them to make war, that tipped the balance of power in the Spaniards' disfavor. Comanches never engaged in pitched battles if they could avoid it and eschewed large cavalry tactics for small hit-and-run attacks, thus

neutralizing the Spaniards' crucial advantage over Native Americans—their ability and willingness to pin down enemies and kill them en masse. The contest over military dominance in the Southwest borderlands would be determined piecemeal, in incessant small-scale skirmishes rather than in climatic battles, which gave the Comanches an enduring advantage.

The mid-eighteenth-century Comanches had experienced an astounding ascent, but as their territorial expansion slowed down, the factors that had made them so powerful began to render them vulnerable. Comancheria's massive size sustained a rapid economic growth, yet its vastness also left the Comanches exposed: their homeland was encircled by dozens of native powers, several of them clamoring for its immense natural resources, some harboring deep resentment for having been marginalized.

Another key advantage that over time turned into a liability was Comanches' willingness to rearrange their existence around foreign innovations. Their expansion was propelled by a steady, partially coerced inflow of horses, guns, metal, and carbohydrates, and its culmination brought a somber realization: to retain what they had seized, Comanches needed unhindered access to imported food and technology.

The problem was that Comanchería, a geopolitical backwater, was also a commercial frontier. Major long-distance trade routes still skirted or ended on its borders, forcing Comanches to search for commercial openings in the surrounding urban centers.

The trade journeys to border fairs were also biologically hazardous, exposing Comanches to the teeming microbe pools of densely packed trading villages.

Out of Comanches' efforts to protect their lives, land, and autonomy sprang the second stage of their ascent. Secluded and vulnerable in their new homeland, they designed and improvised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a series of geopolitical arrangements that molded the bordering regions—New Mexico, Texas, and northern Mexico—into a configuration that could sustain their fragile existence.

Once again, the horse was the catalyst. If the prospects and exigencies of equestrianism had powered Comanches' territorial conquest, their postterritorial ascent rested on their ability to use horse wealth to connect, pacify, and manipulate adjacent societies. As the lords of the southern plains, Comanches had enviable access to the rich animal reservoirs in the Spanish Southwest, an advantage they exploited to the full. They alternately purchased and plundered horses from Texas and New Mexico, accumulating reserves of tens of thousands of tradable surplus animals, which was enough to pull most of the Plains Indians into their commercial orbit, to support several variously successful indigenous horse cultures on the continental grasslands, to equip New Orleans and other eastern colonial centers with draft animals, and to support the westward expansion of America's settlement frontier in the Deep South.

In return for supplying a good portion of the continent with equine power, Comanches won access to several colonial and indigenous markets and two vital imports: guns and food. They soon surpassed Spanish colonists in firepower, thus further accelerating their ascent on the competitive technological ladder that

rested on Columbian exchanges, and the technological balance of power in the borderlands remained tilted in their favor well into the nineteenth century.

If the bustling trading empire furnished the Comanches with the necessary technology to dominate the Southwest, it also helped them support the necessary numbers to do so. With a steady inflow of corn, beans, squash, sunflower seeds, and even baked bread from neighboring farming societies, they built a diet that many modern nutritionists would consider almost ideal: moderate or high in protein, iron, and vitamin B-12; moderate in complex carbohydrates; and low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

For European microbes, moreover, the Comanche trade network was a thoroughly frustrating entity. Such was its drawing power that Comanches, one of history's most mobile societies, largely stopped traveling for trade. Instead of visiting surrounding, germ-filled urban centers for commerce, they simply waited in their camps deep in Comanchería for foreign trade convoys to arrive, an immeasurable advantage in the new post-Columbian disease environment. Comanchería was vast and, because the sick rarely traveled far, the visiting trading parties that made the distance were consistently healthy. It appears that smallpox reached epidemic levels only four times in Comanchería before the mid-1840s—a strikingly small number given its geopolitical centrality and numerous commercial ties—and the well-nourished Comanches quickly rebounded after each outbreak. The Comanche population hovered from twenty to thirty thousand until the mid-nineteenth century, making them by far the most populous indigenous society in the colonial Southwest.

Prosperous, populous, and connected, Comanchería emerged by the dawn of the nineteenth century as the kinetic center of the lower mid-continent, a seat of power that possessed a strong political, economic, and cultural hold over the surrounding native and European societies. It was a startling power asymmetry that flowed—through human agency—from a compelling environmental asymmetry. On the Great Plains north of Comanchería, winters became increasingly longer and growing seasons shorter, thwarting animal husbandry. Living in one of the world's great natural equine habitats, the ecologically privileged Comanches could maintain large horse herds with relative ease and export surplus animals to perennial deficit regions, where their native customers grew increasingly dependent on Comanchería's commercial services. By controlling the south-to-north flow of animal wealth in mid-America, Comanches held the key to the economic and military success of numerous societies, a position of daunting geographic power that transformed into seductive soft power. Dazzled by Comanchería's dynamic horse culture and dwarfed by its economic reach, native societies across the plains attached themselves to the Comanche orbit as political allies, making Comanchería one of the most tranquil places in early America. They mimicked Comanche customs, learned Comanche language, and accepted Comanche norms of proper behavior, turning economic dependency into cultural intimacy. Eventually, many immigrated to Comanchería, enticed by its material wealth and political security, and became, in contemporary language, the "subordinates" or "vassals" of the Comanches, who "teach them their own martial habits and help to improve their condition," "finally amalgamating them into their nation."

Viewed from the north and east, Comanchería was a massive trade pump that siphoned Eurasian livestock into North American trade arteries, growing increasingly wealthy and powerful from the arrangement. Facing the Spanish colonies in the south and west, Comanches displayed a different variation of indigenous imperialism, one embedded in coercion and exploitation. The two facets were linked. To maintain their commercial hegemony, Comanches needed secure access to Spanish animal reserves, which in turn made it necessary for them to have a particular kind of New Mexico and Texas on their borders: militarily weak, politically submissive, yet economically viable. This imperative explains why scholars find the Comanches raiding across the Southwest, decade after decade, for domesticated, ready-to-sell horses even while parleying, trading, and collecting gifts under the threat of violence at certain frontier outposts. Comanches, in other words, blended organized pillaging, tribute extraction, and coerced exchange into a complex economy of violence that eventually reduced much of the Spanish far north to an exploited periphery.... The Comanches' composite foreign policy gradually fragmented Spain's already disjointed northern frontier after its own image. Eastern New Mexico, Spanish officials feared, was being corrupted by the long shadow of Comanche influence, its citizens gravitating toward Comanchería's markets and prestige, desiring to live "in a complete liberty, *in imitation of the wild tribes which they see nearby*," even as the rest of the Spanish frontier was being subjected to wholesale Comanche raiding. By the 1810s Comanches were treating the Spanish Southwest like a colonial possession.

Comanches bent others to their will because they wanted what most hegemonic people want—security, prosperity, respect—but to fully understand their expansionist drive historians must move closer to the ground and examine the politics of grass. For all the geopolitical, economic, and cultural incentives, the over-riding impulse that pushed the Comanches to expand was a need to maximize grasslands holdings on which their survival and their power ultimately rested.

Grass mattered so much because Comanches had become pastoralists. During the eighteenth century, they converted their foraging economy into a hybrid economy of hunting and herding, thereby entering an uncharted realm of economic possibilities and ecological constraints. Comanchería, a luscious patchwork of buffalo, grama, and bluestem grasses, hardly seems a setting where animal herders would feel confined, but the impression of limitless natural bounty conceals a volatile environment whose gifts were at once abundant and unpredictable. The seemingly bottomless forage supply of normal years dwindled as much as 90 percent during dry spells that frequently scourged the southern plains. When the rains failed, grasses went underground, storing nutrients in their sprawling root structures and beyond animals' reach. Pastures also fluctuated seasonally as dry winter currents suppressed the rains, leaving grasses starved and stunted. During those nutritional crunches, there was not enough grass to go around for all. The main rivals were horses and bison, two ecologically incompatible species with an 80 percent dietary overlap and nearly identical survival strategies.

Viewed abstractly, the late-eighteenth-century Comanches were heading toward an ecological impasse out of which there were two immediate paths,

both of them bad. Comanches could have continued their delicate balancing between herd maximization and overgrazing within the existing material parameters, yet that ran the risk of ruining their nutritional mainstay. They also could have curbed the size of their domesticated herds—or, alternatively, their own numbers—to alleviate the pressure on the bison, but that would have undercut their commercial pull and military power, rendering them vulnerable to colonial and indigenous rivals. And so, instead of adjusting to existing ecological limits, Comanches crafted, in stages and over several decades, a multilayered land-use strategy that rested on creative exploitation of not only Comanchería's resources but also those of the neighboring regions. It was a strategy that would eventually extend the Comanche resource base deep into Mexico, yet it began as a simple bid to preserve what was readily available at home.

The new resource strategy revolved around a complex annual cycle of activities that helped allocate life's essentials for prey and domesticated animals. Like the bison, Comanches shifted in winters toward the riverine lowlands and their life-sustaining offerings of tall grasses, timber, water, and shelter. For more than four months, they led a largely sedentary life, moving their villages up and down the bottomlands only when grasses failed or camp refuse became unmanageable. They dwelled close enough to the buffalo to conduct small-scale hunts but far enough to secure their horses foraging areas not already exhausted by bison.

Comanches did not reenter the nomadic phase until late spring, when short grasses sprouted on the highlands. Large winter villages broke into numerous small bands to maximize grazing areas, and Comanchería transformed into a pastoral beehive, where dozens of scattered bands moved constantly, seeking fresh forage to bulk up their horses and carefully synchronizing their movements to avoid overlapping grazing areas. As in winters Comanches kept their horses and the bison segregated.

The distinctive annual cycle was a complex adaptation that helped ease the ecological contradictions at the heart of the new Comanche economy that married subsistence hunting to intensive market-driven pastoralism. But Comanches changed not just the way they used the land; they changed the land itself. The pastoral Comanchería was an anthropogenic landscape that had been altered biologically to meet the needs of expanding animal husbandry. Comanches burned patches of grass to encourage new growth for forage, harvested massive amounts of cottonwood for supplemental winter fodder, and turned vast sections of riverine habitats into veritable equine sanctuaries by crowding out other animal species. And yet, in the end, such adaptations could carry them only so far. Sometime in the late eighteenth century, the pastoral growth reached a threshold at which Comanches had to either reduce their herding economy or find ways to channel its ecological burdens out of Comanchería. The first alternative was all but unthinkable—not only the nation's collective power but also its members' personal status depended on horse wealth—and so Comanches embraced the latter option, with momentous repercussions for themselves and the peoples around them.

One early experiment with ecological cost management involved transhumance, seasonal movement of people and their livestock to new pastures. In

the 1770s, apparently prompted by an exceptionally intense drought, Comanches began migrating between lowland plains valleys in winters and cool mountain pastures in summers. These vertical migrations moved a portion of Comanche horse herds—along with the accompanying ecological burdens of animal foraging—from Comanchería to Spanish borderlands in New Mexico and Ute territory in the Colorado plateau. Regardless of destination the westbound migrations coincided with violent raids—in New Mexico on Spanish outposts and in the plateau on the Utes, whose alliance with the Comanches had unraveled—underscoring the extent to which grass had become a political object.

Episodically expanding Comanchería beyond its plains base, seasonal trans-border migrations remained a vital drought-combating strategy into the late nineteenth century, but they were not enough to stabilize Comanchería's burgeoning pastoral economy. Around 1800 the growing horse herds began to cut deep into Comanchería's increased carrying capacity even under normal climatic conditions, forcing Comanches to expand their archive of land-use strategies. They found a solution, undoubtedly through trial and error, in an age-old borderlands institution that at first glance has little to do with ecological management: frontier raiding.

By pillaging colonial settlements for domesticated horses, Comanches implemented an unequal division of labor and ecological exchange in the borderlands. They focused on the high-profit activities of livestock raiding and trading and, through border raiding, forced New Mexican and Texan settlers to absorb the bulk of the labor and ecological costs of animal husbandry. Settlers invested enormous amounts of energy, grass, and grain in raising horses, only to repeatedly lose significant portions of their herds to Comanche raiders who, in a sense, used the twin colonies as an animal factory and an ecological relief valve. When Comanches raided New Mexico and Texas for horses, they appropriated not only marketable animals but also foreign natural resources to conserve their own. With each pilfered horse, they got more than the animal itself. They also extracted the years of labor and the millions of calories that went into bringing that animal to maturity, all of which meant crucial savings of human and natural resources in Comanchería.

Raiding thus served to externalize the environmental costs of market-oriented pastoralism, an advantage Comanches amplified by keeping separate clusters of animals for different economic and cultural purposes. As one contemporary discovered, they "could scarcely be induced to sell" their domestically raised animals, which had been trained for various tasks from pulling travois to bison hunting. The stolen animals, in contrast, were promptly channeled into trading circuits. Thoroughly commodified, they were often sold within weeks or months of being pilfered—Comanches raided and traded almost year-round, constantly shifting between the two activities—which meant that they left a relatively light ecological hoofprint on Comanchería's natural setting.

By the time Spanish rule yielded to Mexico in 1821, generations of unremitting raiding had finally crippled the Texas ranching economy, making it difficult for Comanches to conduct profitable raids in the colony. From the mid-1820s, moreover, Texas was flooded by well-armed Anglo-American settlers, whose presence in

the colony made raiding a risky proposition. New Mexico, too, lost its appeal to Comanche raiders. Mexican officials attached the province to Comanchería through a thinly veiled tribute relationship that shielded it from violence, and New Mexicans specialized increasingly in sheepherding, having less than one thousand horses in the late 1820s. Needing a new source of horses to keep their market-oriented economy running, Comanches pushed below the Rio Grande in such intensity that several northern Mexican departments organized their meager resources for war.

Mexico yielded not only horses but also the laborers to manage them, and most Comanche raiding parties brought home human captives as well as animals. Scouring northern Mexico for human loot, they transformed themselves into large-scale slaveholders in roughly a generation. By the 1850s the slave component of their population probably exceeded 10 percent. Slaves thus boosted the Comanche population, yet their bodies also carried a hidden gift. Studies suggest that Native Americans were so vulnerable to Old World diseases not because their immune systems were weaker but because they were strikingly homogeneous: once adapted to their relatively uniform immune systems, infections may have taken a greater toll than in more heterogeneous populations. Since Comanches drew most of their slaves from a different gene pool—a large portion of them were mestizos—the slavery-marriage-motherhood continuum may have given their communities some measure of protection through immune system diversity.

Contemporaries understood that the expansion below the Rio Grande was first and last an economic endeavor that sustained the vast Comanche trading empire north of the great river. The plains-based commercial network, its limbs reaching toward the Canadian Plains and the U.S. South, formed with the Mexican raiding hinterland the economic foundation of a transregional power complex that kept numerous peoples on the Comanche orbit through overlapping bonds of violence, exchange, extortion, and dependency. What has been less clear is that the push into Mexico was also a biological necessity. During the first third of the nineteenth century, Comanches experienced three momentous changes that boosted their political and economic might while placing unforeseen pressure on their natural resources. Possibly prompted by the 1799–1816 smallpox epidemics, they incorporated several Arapahoe and Wichita bands and the entire Kiowa and Naishan nations into their increasingly multiethnic realm, where newcomers exchanged varying degrees of their autonomy for access to Comanchería's wealth and safety. Then, diffusing potential conflict with commerce, Comanches forged exchange relationships with the encroaching immigrant tribes of Indian Territory—the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and others—who began conducting regular trade journeys into Comanchería, subsisting on its bison as they traversed across it. Finally, spurred by the establishment of Bent's Fort and other Anglo-American trading posts on their borders, Comanches embarked on a mass-scale production of bison hides, converting their commissary into an animal of enterprise. It was not long before Comanchería's

bison started to show signs of overexploitation. Strains started to appear in the 1810s, and by the 1830s the herds had become visibly diminished.

The Mexico-bound incursions were, in part, a response to the bison's troubles. War bands brought back massive numbers of horses that were promptly exchanged for food and manufactured goods at Anglo-American posts or, increasingly, eaten. Early-nineteenth-century Comanches consumed increasing amounts of horseflesh—some sources call it their favorite food—which reduced pressure on the bison. But if large-scale raiding helped the bison by furnishing an alternative food source, it also helped by simply carrying humans away. The deeper into Mexico the Comanches pushed, the longer they stayed there, and the larger their war bands, the less human pressure there was on Comanchería's distressed bison. As the burden on Comanchería's bison ecology increased, so did the size and frequency of Comanche raiding expeditions, which in the 1840s routinely featured hundreds of warriors. Pushing deep into Durango, Zacatecas, and San Luis Potosí, the massive war bands spent months on foreign soil, living off the land while sacking ranches, villages, towns, and mining communities. They butchered cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats for food across the countryside and extracted gifts of meat and bread in urban centers. They let their oversize horse herds forage on the abundant grama grasses of the Mexican plateau, where killing frosts came rarely, and they took their herds to graze in the dampish mountain forests of Coahuila and Nuevo León. After successful raids they sometimes allowed their animals to feed on Mexican grain stores. Their war trails and campsites were littered with animal bones, rotting carcasses, trampled fields, and drained food caches, all markers of a new environmental strategy that allowed them to displace environmental loads to the south to sustain their power far in the north.

Strategy? Such an argument for intentionality might seem anachronistic, registering as too Western, too openly in conflict with accepted truths about indigenous environmental ethics that are embedded in a spiritual matrix, but that is not necessarily the case. There is, first of all, the sheer scale of Comanche operations to consider. In the course of the 1830s, Comanche raids into Mexico escalated into cyclical migrations. War bands started to travel with entire families and stay below the Rio Grande for months and sometimes years. The Bolsón de Mapimí, a vast mountain-nestled desert plateau in the heart of northern Mexico and the chief crossroads of Comanche war trails, began to take the shape of a permanent, self-sustaining settlement colony. The Bolsón was a neo-Comanchería in the making, a transformed territory where Comanches lived as they did in Comanchería proper, hunting game and gathering wild plants for subsistence and slowly migrating from one camping ground to another. They lined their favorite Bolsón campsites with parapets and crowded river bottoms with their massive herds, and their horses scarred the landscape with their hooves, pervading the region with an aura of a colonized landscape.

All these developments—the hundreds-strong war bands, the multiseasonal expeditions, the Bolsón colony—appear excessive for the purposes of livestock raiding, suggesting that another motive was involved. That motive, it seems, was

ecological: the massive invasion of foreign territories helped stabilize Comanchería's battered bison ecology that was collapsing under the weight of an imperial economy. Yet listing the ecological benefits of large-scale long-distance raiding only suggests causality; it does not reveal intention. To access Comanche motives, it is necessary to have Comanche words. In 1872 at Fort Sill Agency in Indian Territory, U.S. government agents met with prominent Comanche chiefs, trying to convince them to become farmers and give up hunting and raiding. When told that the bison would soon disappear—the United States' industrial assault on the herds was already under way—a Comanche speaker retorted that "there were yet millions of buffalo, and there was no danger on that hand." But "lest they might fail," he continued, "they, the Comanches, had determined to hunt buffalo only next winter, then they would allow them to breed a year or two without molestation, and they would rely on Texas cattle for subsistence meantime." This startling declaration laid bare the dual character of Comanche imperialism that had dominated the history of the American Southwest for more than a century: it was a geopolitical endeavor of projecting power outward and a biological endeavor of dispatching environmental burdens of expansion elsewhere.

An economic colossus resting on a relatively delicate ecological foundation, the Comanche power complex was an inherently unstable entity. Comanches' massive horse herds, the source and symbol of their power, also rendered them vulnerable to ecological damage and external aggression. Comanches managed to head off the looming implosion by shifting environmental costs to adjacent regions, but the onset of a twenty-year dry spell in the mid-1840s brought on a full-scale crisis, then collapse.

Even with many of their bands in Mexico, Comanches and their horses crowded Comanchería's few riparian habitats where forage and water remained available, denying the bison access to the life-sustaining drought refuges. Half of Comanchería's seven million bison may have perished, leaving the Comanches reeling. Famine left them exposed to disease, and they were struck by cholera in 1849 and smallpox in 1848, 1851, and 1861. By the early 1860s, the Comanches had lost more than half their numbers and, with that, their power to command. They surrendered their raiding domains, gave up tribute extraction, and witnessed their commercial pull dissipate to almost nothing.

Yet it was not inevitable that this crisis would lead to collapse. Comanches had repeatedly recovered from drought- and disease-induced crises during their imperial tenure, and they may well have done so this time as well. Indeed, as the drought passed in the mid-1860s, Comanches resumed large-scale raiding, their war bands ranging across debilitated, post-Civil War Texas, stealing livestock, taking captives, and subsisting on stolen cattle. The Comanches of the late 1860s seemed to have found a new ecological balance in their home territory, and they were becoming a domineering force in the borderlands once again.

And then it ended, not because large biohistorical dynamics had suddenly turned against them but because a new player entered the scene. The United States had extended its southwestern boundary to the Rio Grande in the

Mexican-American War, boxing in the Comanches, whose devastating raids across Mexico had inadvertently helped the Americans win the war, yet the expansionist republic did not become a major disruptive force in Comanche history until the late 1860s. For nearly two decades after the Mexican-American War, the U.S. pressure on Comanchería came in pieces—in the the form of overland trails, new military forts at the Texas frontier, and Anglo-Texan settlers—but the end of the Civil War brought the deluge: agribusiness, ranching industry, and railroads ushered in a new order of free-labor capitalism in which there was no place for independent slave-raiding Indians. In 1871 the U.S. Army launched a total war in Comanchería, targeting horses, bison, and food caches as much as people. Still a shadow of their former imperial selves, the recovering Comanches were powerless against the onslaught, and their last, half-starved bands moved to Indian Territory in 1875.

FURTHER READING

- Anderson, Gary Clayton. *The Indian Southwest, 1580–1830: Ethnogenesis and Reinvention* (1999).
- Anderson, Karen. *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (1991).
- Aron, Stephen. *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (1996).
- . *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (2006).
- Barbour, Barton H. *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (2001).
- Barr, Juliana. *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (2007).
- Binnema, Theodore. *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (2001).
- Blackhawk, Ned. *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (2006).
- Brooks, James F. *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002).
- Brown, Jennifer S. H. *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (1980).
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983; rev. ed., 2003).
- Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972).
- . *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (1986).
- DeJohn Anderson, Virginia. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (2004).

- Ewers, John C. *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture: With Comparative Material from Other Western Tribes* (1955).
- Flores, Dan. "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850." *Journal of American History* 78 (Sep. 1991): 464–485.
- Gunlög, Fur. *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians* (2009).
- Gutiérrez, Ramón A. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (1991).
- Hackel, Steven W. *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769–1850* (2005).
- Hämäläinen, Pekka. "The Rise and Fall of Plains Indian Horse Cultures." *Journal of American History* 90 (Dec. 2003): 833–862.
- . *The Comanche Empire* (2008).
- Harrod, Howard L. *The Animals Came Dancing: Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship* (2000).
- Hoxie, Frederick E. *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805–1935* (1995).
- Iserberg, Andrew C. *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750–1920* (2000).
- Jackson, John C. *Children of the Fur Trade: Forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest* (1995).
- John, Elizabeth A. H. *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1640–1795* (1975).
- Kelton, Paul. *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southwest, 1492–1715* (2007).
- Krech, Shepard III. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999).
- Lansing, Michael J. "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804–1868." *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 2000): 413–433.
- Mancall, Peter C. *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (1995).
- Martin, Calvin. *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationship and the Fur Trade* (1978).
- Morgan, Jennifer L. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (2004).
- Perdue, Theda. *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (1998).
- Plane, Ann Marie. *Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England* (2000).
- Radding, Cynthia. *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700–1850* (1997).
- Ray, Arthur J. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870* (1974).
- Seeman, Erik R. *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492–1800* (2010).
- Silver, Timothy. *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in the South Atlantic Forests, 1500–1800* (1900).
- Sleeper-Smith, Susan. *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (2004).

- . *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (2009).
- Spear, Jennifer M. *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (2009).
- Thorne, Tanis C. *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (1996).
- Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (1983).
- Weisiger, Marsha. *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (2009).
- West, Elliott. *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (1998).
- White, Richard. *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (1983).
- . *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (1991).
- Wishart, David J. *The Fur Trade of the American West: A Geographical Synthesis* (1979).