

Review

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understanding of the history of twentieth century Plains Indians. This reviewer, frankly, would opt for the latter—for a work that offers a detailed, fully situated portrayal of one tribe, enabling the reader to acquire more than cursory and scantily contextualized glimpses of assorted peoples and topics. The essays in this anthology especially confirm that choice since they illustrate how much the same processes and events shaping this period of Plains Indian history have been and are today shared by most tribes.

If the volume does not succeed entirely as a textbook, it does offer a fine sample of recent Plains Indian historical scholarship, especially since most of the authors represented in it are among the most active in this field. It demonstrates that for only a precious few tribes are there exemplary, insightful historical studies of twentieth century life, of which the major contributions are Berthrong's histories of the Oklahoma Cheyenne and Arapaho and Fowler's of the Northern Arapahoe and Gros Ventre. Hopefully, Iverson's anthology will stimulate more interest in and future contributions to this largely neglected subject.

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Dempsey, Hugh A. *Big Bear: The End of Freedom*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 227 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth.

Big Bear's story tells of one man's efforts to preserve the dignity and freedom of his people in the face of forced change. Big Bear developed a strategy of evasion when the Canadian government began to pressure the plains tribes to give up their lands, and their way of life for the monotony of government reservations. Big Bear stubbornly resisted these efforts. He refused the annuities and other inducements to sign a treaty, choosing instead to sustain traditional ways as long as possible, while preparing for the inevitable changes he knew would come.

The Canadian authorities viewed his studied recalcitrance as evidence of his hostility toward the government, despite his peaceful tactics and his understanding of the issues facing his people. Eventually forced by starvation into signing the treaty in 1883, he continued to work for changes that would make the transition easier for his people. Ironically, the vision of Big Bear was misunderstood as much among his own people as among the government agents.

By the time of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, Big Bear had been virtually deposed as a leader. He was at Frog Lake when the Cree rebellion became violent although he deplored what happened there and tried to point out its futility to those who took power. After the rebellion was crushed Big Bear was arrested as one of the ringleaders and sentenced to prison. The injustice was overwhelming, and he was eventually freed. But by then, he was a broken old man, abandoned by his family and most of his followers. Ironically, the leaders the Cree had chosen to follow, brought them the destitution and tragedy that Big Bear had worked so hard to avoid.

Few volumes so eloquently describe the interaction between the cultures of natives and intruders as this one. To his credit, Hugh Dempsey has dem-

onstrated that the problem was not merely one of faulty communication between American Indians and white government officials, but also one of strong differences among Indian peoples themselves. This book is measured, careful and judicious without sacrificing a writing style that preserves the impact of Big Bear's demise. Dempsey has been particularly successful in blending his documentation into a thoughtful and sympathetic biography without falling prey to sentimentalism or advocacy.

The result is a work which cleanly and clearly reveals the insensitivity of government leaders, the shortsightedness of many of his own people, and the essential failure of policy. The book also demolishes some of the stereotypes of Canadian policy which suggest that Canada was wiser in its Indian policy than the United States, suggesting that ethnocentrism and cultural indifference were active factors in the Canadian experience as well. Still, the book offers useful contrasts for those who are more familiar with Indian affairs in the United States.

Hugh Dempsey has done a creditable job, and this book is highly recommended.

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Markoe, Glen E., ed. *Vestiges of a Proud Nation: The Ogden B. Read Northern Plains Indian Collection*. Burlington, Vermont: The Robert Hull Fleming Museum, 1986. (Distributed by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln). Photos, illustrations, notes, appendix. \$35.00 cloth; \$20.00 paper.

In the past few years there has been a constant flow of new publications dealing with Native American art and material culture (historic and contemporary). A recent addition to this flow, *Vestiges of a Proud Nation* documents the Ogden B. Read collection of nineteenth century North Plains objects, as well as other Plains Indian items in the permanent collections of the Robert Hull Fleming Museum at the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont.

For the serious student of historic Plains Indian art and material culture, *Vestiges of a Proud Nation* is a must. The text is lavishly illustrated and contains some true masterpieces of Plains Indian art. Publications such as this allow researchers—usually working with restricted budgets—to see objects they would not normally be aware of or not have finances available for travel to see. *Vestiges* adds to the general body of knowledge of historic Plains Indian material, allowing for comparative analysis and interpretation of objects. But for the scholar, that is where the usefulness of this text ends. If you're looking for a body of new information on the art of the Plains Indians, as well as the place of the objects within the culture of their origin, there is nothing new here.

Four writers contribute remarks or essays to the text. George P. Horse Capture, curator of the Plains Indian Museum in Cody, Wyoming, offers the Preface to the catalogue. While he presents little new scholarship, he addresses a point ignored elsewhere in the catalogue.