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R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, Neal Salisbury. *The People: A History of Native America.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007. xiii + 528 pp. No price listed (cloth), ISBN 978-0-669-24495-3.

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Survival and Persistence in Native North America

R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury are leaders in the field of native North American history, and together they have crafted an excellent textbook. Native history has undergone something of a renaissance over the past twenty years thanks to the interpretive power of the ethnohistorical method. Indeed, the authors' practice of ethnohistory, more so than the actual events and lives they narrate, sets this book apart in an increasingly crowded field.

Ethnohistory is a methodology premised on culture. Its practitioners draw on anthropological assumptions about culture–what it is, how it works, and how it changes–and explore them in reference to historical questions about cause and effect, and change and persistence over time. By taking culture as a starting point, the authors ably position themselves to tell the inner workings of the native past. They have not written a story about how European invaders and American officials and settlers affected single-handedly a particular kind of history; rather they have focused on how various groups of "the people" held fast to who they were in the most trying of circumstances.

The authors begin with the simple premise that while outsiders might refer to various nations as Apache, Cherokee, or Sioux, the nations identify themselves as each being the real and true people who inhabit the center of a far-flung world. The pride of place and self-confidence that comes with such an identification goes a long way toward explaining why the authors are so interested in the peoples' "*survival* in the face of dispossession and horrific cruelty, and [their] courageous *persistence* in the face of colonization and oppression" (p. x, emphasis in original).

Five themes organize the authors' approach to the twin narratives of survival and persistence. Some involve the direct conflicts that followed from colonization: how the people struggled to defend their land and autonomy, for example, or how they fought to preserve their cultures and beliefs. Two other themes relate to the inner workings of each of the peoples: how their views of family and gender shaped their lives and how their cultural diversity undermines the utility of a term like "Indian." Last, another important theme is how outsiders understood the people, and one of the constants of their history is how, after contact with Europeans, the meaning of being "Indian" changed over time.

Neither the scope of the study–from precontact to the present–nor the substantive subject matter–Christopher Columbus, the skin trade, epidemic disease, removals, Wounded Knee, and so forth–mark the book as unique. Indeed, as a community it appears that scholars have agreed largely on the basic outline of native North American history. But the authors' use of ethnohistory is unique and gives their analysis an edge and an importance that sets the book apart from other similar texts. For example, the authors explain how the Iroquois incorporated the Dutch into their kinship system and how the Pueblos worked Spaniards into their pantheon of *katsina* spirits so that contact and colonization is presented as a two-sided phenomenon that can only be understood when each side of the story is respected. What circulates in public memory today as the sale of the island of Manhattan by a group of Indians for a handful of beads becomes in *The People* an offer by the Canansee Munsees to draw Dutch traders more deeply into their diplomatic and kinship alliances. Contemporary events merit the same careful attention, from the awful massacre at Wounded Knee, to the terrible suffering that followed Allotment, to the American Indian Movement (AIM), to the recent profusion of casinos on reservations. In addition to the insights of ethnohistory, the authors bring to the book a narrative voice that is a cut above typical textbook prose. They tell a story rather than recount facts, and in places one cannot help but be struck by the power such an approach brings to the text. One particularly salient example follows a description of a vision that Sit-

ting Bull had on the eve of his battle with General George A. Custer. "In his vision," the authors write, "Sitting Bull saw soldiers, like many grasshoppers, falling headfirst from the sky into the Lakota village." Paying ethnohistorical attention to such a vision yields an alternative narrative to "Custer's Last Stand," but when the authors conclude that "it was powerful medicine," a reader cannot help but feel momentarily connected to past prophecies (p. 302). It is powerful stuff.

The People is an excellent textbook and would be useful in any number of survey courses. But it does have one limitation. The authors have focused on the history of native North America as it unfolded within what became the modern boundaries of the United States. In this way, the establishment of such boundaries exerts a powerful influence on the organization of the book. Of course, native history transcends national boundaries such that one cannot speak of the Iroquois without considering Canada nor the Apaches and Comanches without mentioning Mexico. From time to time, the authors invoke the northern and southern neighbors of the United States, and I do not question their U.S. focus. At the same time, however, authors of the next generation of such texts will need to think hemispherically rather than nationally to heighten even more the themes of survival, persistence, and peoplehood, and to carry on the good work that Edmunds, Hoxie, and Salisbury have accomplished with the publication of *The People*.

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