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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Gerald M. Sider. *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Southern United States.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xxvi + 309 pp. $21.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-46669-1; $18.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-42045-7.

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Published on H-Ethnic (May, 1996)

The Politics of Indian Identity

Lumbee Indian Histories is the second volume of Gerald Sider's three volume effort to provide "a theory of culture in history: the role of culture in the formation and transformation of systems of inequality" (p. v). Sider's ambitious and theoretically sophisticated work seeks to bridge the gap between anthropological and historical approaches to Native American Studies by using the case of the Lumbee–a small group of Native Americans living in Robeson county in south central North Carolina–to explore Lumbee ethnogenesis and redefinition in the context of colonial conquest and subsequent oppression. Sider traces the transformation of Lumbee identity–both self-identity and the identities imposed upon them by their colonial masters–from contact to the present to illustrate how colonialism has shaped the identity of these peoples and their descendants (and by extension Native peoples throughout the southeastern United States). Sider's work nicely complements recent works such as David Roediger's *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (1994) exploring the emergence and transformation of "whiteness" by reminding us of the ongoing transformation of "redness" in American culture. Attention to this crucial process places *Lumbee Indian Histories* at the forefront of recent research striving to understand the constructed nature of ethnic and racial identity.

In telling the story of the Lumbee, Sider takes the reader on a journey backward from the recent past to the era of first contact between these peoples and Europeans. Sider begins by describing the internal conflicts–between those who continued to think of themselves as "Lumbee" and a smaller group who began calling themselves "Tuscarora"–which rent these people when Sider arrived among them in 1967 (Sider has spent parts of the past three decades as an activist among the Lumbee). Sider sees this split growing partly out of conflict between relatively well-off "Lumbee" and more economically hard-pressed "Tuscarora." Those who embraced the "Lumbee" label had reached a rapprochement with whites over a limited form of autonomy focused mainly on control of local schools and cultural institutions. Those who defined themselves as "Tuscarora" believed that only by embracing an admittedly problematic identity sanctioned by what Sider and the Lumbee call "the White power elite" could they attain any level of self-determination. The Lumbee/Tuscarora split is thus merely the most recent manifestation of a structural problem embedded in adopting such a fluid identity: the inevitable emergence of chronic fractures of community identity.

Sider's point is that this conflict demonstrates how internal disputes over self-definition reflect and influence the conflicts over recognition by their colonial masters that have plagued the Lumbee and their compatriots throughout US history. His ultimate goal is to illustrate how shifting internal boundaries both reflect and mediate external conflicts, leading in the case of Native Americans to increasingly constrained options for self-determination. Initially invented as "peoples" by European categories, Sider demonstrates that Southeastern Natives–particularly those situated on the economically marginal (at least in white eyes) borderlands between the piedmont and the coastal plains stretching from New Jersey to Florida–have tried to use white categories to advance their own interests. Sider considers the Lumbee the most striking example of those Native American groups that chose not "acculturation" to white society but instead crafted fluid identities that permitted them to maintain a limited measure of autonomy.

Thus, in Sider's words, "ethnicity does not simply emerge from history; history is created within ethnicity." His most telling insight regarding the interconnections among dynamic variables that scholars of various stripes have often taken for granted is his claim that "If impoverishment and domination shape ethnicity and ethnicity, when seen as a process, creates and claims histories,

then oppression creates history through culture as well as class" (pp. 114-15). This dynamic formulation of identity formation, stressing the interrelationships among economic exploitation, historical consciousness, culture, and ethnicity, allows Sider to link these processes instead of falling into the all too common trap of discussing each process in isolation.

Lumbee identity emerged in an ongoing dialectical process in concert with US government efforts to fit them into rigid racial categories. Over the past two hundred years the Lumbee have repeatedly had their official "identity" changed by the US government. Initially the Lumbee were not identified as "Indians" at all; instead, they possessed most of the rights of those residents considered "white," which permitted them to straddle the new nation's racial boundaries. When North Carolina revised its constitution in 1835 they were lumped with free African Americans as "Free Persons of Color," a designation that remained in effect until emancipation. The Civil War, while freeing them of this designation, nonetheless left the Lumbee experiencing much of the discrimination faced by those considered "'non-White."' In 1885 North Carolina formally recognized them as "Indians," thereby setting off a century of struggle over just what kind of "Indians" they were and what associated benefits and constraints "Indian" identity imposed upon them (pp. xv-xvi).

Termed "Croatan Indians" in 1885, they rejected this term because local whites had shortened it to "Cro"–implicitly linking them with African Americans suffering under "Jim Crow" laws–and won recognition in 1911 as "Indians of Robeson County." This generic name was replaced by "Cherokee Indians of Robeson County" in 1913, which itself set off conflict with Cherokee from elsewhere in North Carolina who feared that their governmental benefits might be proportionally reduced to accommodate these "new" Cherokee (a dynamic that continues to divide established Native American groups from groups seeking tribal recognition today). After nearly gaining national recognition during the New Deal as "Siouan Indians of the Lumber River," they secured designation as "Lumbee Indians" from North Carolina in 1953 and from the US government in 1956. In keeping with the Eisenhower administration's policy of "terminating" tribal rights, Congress stipulated that the US government would be completely free of legal or financial obligations toward these people (pp. 3-4). While struggling with local whites, neighboring Native Americans, and the state and national governments, the Lumbee were also divided over how to identify themselves in a way that aptly conveyed their historical past, their cultural present, and their aspirations for the future. The Lumbee/Tuscarora split, Sider makes clear, is thus connected to longstanding internal disputes over how to characterize their heritage in order to forge a history both usable to themselves and useful in dealing with their conquerors. Yet each dispute, Sider argues, emerges out of a specific historical context and reflects both the demands of the colonizer and the strivings of the colonized.

Throughout US history whites have maintained control over the Lumbee through control of land, access to credit, power over local schools, vote buying, and the small but significant efforts of white political "paternalism" (p. 97) to siphon off just enough Native American votes to prevent Native American/African American coalitions (which Sider inexplicably poses as almost "natural" alliances) from attaining political victories. A particularly effective white tactic was the outlawing in 1956 of "single shot voting" in multiposition Democratic primary elections. Rather than permitting Native Americans or African Americans to take a "single shot" vote for the one Native American or African American in a field crowded with white candidates, the Democratic party forced voters to vote for as many candidates as there were seats to be filled, thus diluting minority voting influence and forcing them to help defeat their own candidates (pp. 93-5). Within these agricultural, financial, educational, and political realms, Native Americans struggled to define their identities and to carve out a place for themselves within this oppressive system. Sider convincingly demonstrates that these processes were intimately related. As Sider aptly puts it, "the capacity of a dominated people to attack their domination precisely in its own terms and with its own symbols . . . is often limited. . . . A more effective source of oppositional autonomy seems to lie in a dominated people appropriating as their own, and refashioning, the contradictions imposed on them" (p. 99). Whether they were refashioning their identities in efforts to wrest recognition from governmental agencies, running their own community institutions, striving to survive economically on a daily basis, or mobilizing politically to elect Native American candidates, the Lumbee never surrendered. It is in this continuing struggle that Sider finds hope for the future.

Sider intends his work for both general and academic readers. Each audience will find much of value here. The general reader will be drawn into the story of how the Lumbee were transformed–and transformed themselves–from a largely autonomous precontact people (although Sider does not explore their colonial roots) to a people surviving on the periphery of "White" (Sider capitalizes the term throughout) society. Scholars in-

terested in how local developments resonate with issues of personal identity will appreciate Sider's valuable chronology of Lumbee transformations. Historians of Native American culture will find a compelling formulation of the challenges and choices available to peoples confronting US economic and cultural expansion. Ethnic Studies scholars will be rewarded with a carefully crafted presentation of racial and ethnic identity as a dynamic process influenced by a multiplicity of shifting variables. And scholars from several disciplines will find in Sider's theoretical apparatus a nuanced exploration of the innumerable and often conflicting connections among class, race, ethnicity, and culture.

Each of these audiences will also find flaws in Sider's work. The general reader will sometimes feel overwhelmed by a dense writing style that occasionally opts for academic jargon over clarity. Scholars interested in the development of local community institutions and struggles will search in vain for full exploration of the political context of Robeson County. Scholars of Native American studies will seek a more sensitive treatment of how oral traditions may subtly support a persisting counter-hegemonic ethos among the Lumbee rather than merely reflect the triumphant inscription of colonial values in the minds of subjugated peoples. While Sider often accepts Native American accounts of heroic resistance–such as Henry Berry Lowery's famous outlaw band, "the Robin Hoods of Robeson County" (p. 158), which raided wealthy white farmers during and after the Civil War and distributed their booty to poor residents of all races–Sider neglects to incorporate such a counter-hegemonic ethos into his account of Lumbee history.

Ethnic Studies scholars, and all those interested in the gendered nature of human experience, will be disappointed in finding that for all Sider's theoretical sophistication no mention is made of female versions of Lumbee history. Despite recognition that Lumbee women played crucial economic and cultural roles among the Lumbee from the deerskin trade to tobacco farming to textile manufacturing, Sider never addresses how women's experiences of colonialism compared with those of men's. Consideration of these issues in the context of Sylvia Van Kirk's pioneering *Many Tender Ties* (1980) on western Canadian fur trading women would greatly expand the reach of Sider's work. Without such a balanced approach to the gender-specific experiences of colonized peoples, Sider's approach will offer only a partial account of the development and transformation of Lumbee ethnicity.

Moreover, for all its theoretical sophistication and insight into the persistent struggles of the Lumbee for recognition from their more powerful neighbors, these neighbors are never given full form. Lacking are fleshed out versions–or even brief accounts–of the internal tensions dividing the white and Black communities of Robeson County. Incorporating the insights of Steven Hahn's *Roots of Southern Populism* (1983) and James O. Horton's *Free People of Color* (1993) would avoid such monolithic portrayals of these diverse communities. Sider understandably emphasizes white solidarity and briefly mentions the greater racial unity among Black residents. Discussion of the comparative makeups of each group is needed, however, to provide a fuller sense of the tensions and cleavages within these groups that Lumbee peoples have attempted to exploit in order to forge politically and culturally functional group identities.

Fellow historians will perhaps be jolted, as I was, by Sider's conceptualization of what he calls the "problem" embedded in "the connection between doing anthropology and doing history." In his view, the most crucial question facing a scholar is "*how studying the history of a people, questioning them about their history, and doing documentary research on their past affects your relations with the people among whom you live and work*" (p. xxiii, italics in original). Many historians would ask a quite different question: How do your relations with the people you study affect your and their conceptualizations of their past? This question is particularly relevant in Sider's case, given that he traces the genesis of several popular contemporary terms among the Lumbee–"tied mule stories," "locality leader," "the Movement," and "the organization"–to his 1971 dissertation on the Lumbee. These terms have been embraced by local peoples and have "entered into the local political and academic discourse" (pp. 298-9), thus suggesting that changing conceptualizations of Lumbee history emerge not just from "impoverishment and domination" but also from the efforts of a local activist with a quite different agenda. When one becomes as involved with one's subjects as Sider has, full recognition of one's own part in shaping that history is crucial.

Evidentiary issues also merit attention. Historians may find Sider's lack of footnotes troubling. Much of his work grows out of conversations with co-workers and selected readings in cultural theory, and these sources are only addressed briefly in his "Sources and Perspectives" section. More attention to recent historical works on Native Americans in the region such as James H. Merrell's *The Indians' New World* (1989) (which Sider briefly cites) and Karen I. Blu's *The Lumbee Problem* (1980) (which he also cites but does not use extensively) is needed. Historians will be vexed occasionally by Sider's use of con-

fidential sources and his determination to emphasize his special ties as an activist among the Lumbee. This determination becomes especially evident in his essay on sources. He obliquely contests authorship of a key source without clarifying the "other concerns" motivating the misattribution (p. 291). He also provides "silences as requested" regarding his sources (p. 305) and defers to several local residents who read his manuscript and requested that he avoid "identify[ing] some of the participants" in a crucial court case (p. 294). While Sider's respect for his sources' anonymity is admirable, such self-censorship presents a problem in a work ostensibly tracing "*How Native American peoples see, claim, and seek to shape–in sum, produce–their own history*" (p. xvii, italics in original).

Sider's self-conscious and passionately unapologetic involvement with the Lumbee provides a refreshing rejoinder to scholars who imagine themselves clinically detached from their subjects. While it is reassuring to be reminded that anthropologists have become cognizant of and open about personal entanglements with peoples they study, Sider's approach leads to another potential pitfall: the transformation of scholar into crusading journalist protecting his sources with an eye toward providing the only possible credible version of events. While protecting his sources reveals Sider's respect for individuals who may be vulnerable to retaliation, in the end it necessarily limits discussion by claiming journalistic and personal prerogative to present an irrefutable version of a people's past. Maintaining a balance between the demands of historical analysis and loyalty to one's sources is by no means easy, and such editorial decisions are the very stuff of historical discourse. At the very least, Sider's approach can open up debate over just how this ground can be negotiated.

In sum, *Lumbee Indian Histories* offers many contributions to Native American history, ethnic studies, and cultural history. Sider's work sheds fresh light on the formation of Native American identity in one North Carolina county, offers a sophisticated model for understanding the emergence and transformation of racial and ethnic identity, and provides a convincing account of the intimate and often perplexing connections between cultural identity and collective memory. Perhaps most importantly, *Lumbee Indian Histories* presents scholars with an opportunity to reexamine our own involvement–intellectually and in many cases politically–with the peoples we seek to study.

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Citation: Wallace Genser. Review of Sider, Gerald M., *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Southern United States.* H-Ethnic, H-Net Reviews. May, 1996.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=457

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