

H-Net Reviews

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Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed. *The Settling of North America: The Atlas of the Great Migrations into North America from the Ice Age to the Present*. New York: Macmillan Press, 1995. 208 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-614-08321-7.

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Helen Hornbeck Tanner has created a visually sumptuous atlas. The volume opens with an awe-inspiring view of the earth from space. The planet appears as a vast *tabula rasa* devoid of the artificial boundaries that constrain the opening pages of most atlases. The emphasis in this book is on the peopling process, on the sweep of population movements that engulfed the continent. The political divisions which appear to limit and define the population movements depicted in most atlases are not present in this volume. State and national boundaries, such as borders between the United States and its Canadian and Mexican neighbors, are of secondary rather than primary importance.

The atlas is divided into eight chronological sections, each written by a different scholar. Historians might quibble about the validity of such historical demarcations, but these divisions work well in this atlas because of the broad-perspective essays that introduce each section. These six-page summaries provide salient information about events, historical trends, and influences detailed by the maps in each section. The summaries are helpful in constructing a broad overview because individual authors attempt to move beyond a traditional focus. Henry Dobyns, in "First Americans," not only traces population movements along the Bering Strait, he also explores how environmental factors encouraged cultural divisions and influenced the development of distinctive lifeways. The author dismisses the old evolutionary agenda that leads from hunter-gatherers to agriculturalists, and focuses instead on why and how agriculture emerged in regions as disparate as the lands east of the Mississippi and the Colorado Plateau. Rather than relying on broad generalizations to explain regions classified as agricultural or as the domain of the hunter-gatherers, Professor Dobyns hastens to remind us that generaliza-

tions never characterize all people. Thus, in the midst of hunter-gatherers we also find small multi-storied towns in the Little Colorado and Rio Grande valleys where people practiced irrigation. This book is notable for its attempt to avoid the generalizations that have long characterized people of the pre-contact period.

The Settling of North America includes a wide array of material that can be integrated into teaching survey courses. The sections on the twentieth century contain some of the most useful maps from a teaching perspective. Janice Reiff's "Contemporary North America" is a rich resource. There are a number of graphs superimposed on maps that dramatically illustrate this century's most striking demographic changes. Both Reiff's narrative overview and the separate summary that accompanies each map incorporate relevant demographic data. This section is a treasure trove of often difficult-to-locate maps. There are, for instance, maps that detail internal migratory patterns as well as increasing external migrations from the Caribbean, South Asia, and the Middle East. As an added bonus, there is an enlightening comparison between demographic changes in the United States and Canada.

The authors of the twentieth-century sections also attempt to situate demographic change within their long-range historical context. For example, John Long's "People on the Move" locates the twentieth-century demographic transition, when both fertility and mortality rates declined, in a "shift started between 1800 and 1810."

The uniqueness of this atlas also lies in the unusual perspective of many of the maps. Thus, we view the forced migration of American Indians from an indigenous perspective. This map (pp. 90-91) focuses our attention east-to-west. It emphasizes not only the long

westward trek but the large number of indigenous people pushed from the North as well as the South and the length and complexity of a multitude of such journeys. This east-to-west perspective is also true for the map depicting the English colonies, c. 1660 (pp. 46-47). We see colonial and Indian settlements in close proximity along the seaboard and the Appalachian Mountains looming in the background, masking the western landscape.

This atlas, though meant by the publisher for a popular audience, has much to interest college teachers who seek to incorporate a broader and more inclusive perspective on the peopling process in North America. Although there are drawbacks, one cannot help but applaud Helen Hornbeck Tanner's effort to provide us with an atlas that presents what she calls the "cultural mosaic" of North America. By dividing this atlas into chronological sections and then relying on the appropriate scholars, she has given this work academic credibility.

What is most unsettling about this atlas is that the publisher has often been less than rigorous in editing the text and maps. There are a few typographical errors and instances of unusual color coding. For instance, the map on page 49 which details French, Spanish, and British influence in North America uses almost identical colors to

code both French and British settlements. This is less problematic for an academic audience but must confuse many other readers. Most of these deficiencies can be easily remedied when the atlas is revised prior to the next printing.

For those of us who teach an American History survey course, *The Settling of North America* is a welcome addition. It provides dramatic visual support of migration as an inclusive, rather than an exclusive, process. This atlas also has tremendous potential for college students. It provides the first refreshing alternative to the standard and often dreary series of maps that accompany standard textbooks. It is this type of resource that captures student interest in survey courses.

Hopefully, Macmillan will elect to reissue this atlas in paperback. The hardback price of \$39.95 prohibits student use. Yet, this is the audience that would most profit from this vast panorama of maps and summary overviews. These maps would also be an invaluable teaching resource in the classroom.

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