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Comb Ridge and Its People: The Ethnohistory of a Rock. By Robert S. McPherson.

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the ethnographic data collected during the 1933 Comanche field party, the data is a welcome addition to the volume. The inclusion of Lowie's ethnographic data only enhances the work's utility as a reference source. Further, the appendices linking the 1933 field party notes with three major published works produced by E. Adamson Hoebel or Gustav G. Carlson, participants in the field project, provide a useful guide for comparative purposes.

As the author who compiled, edited, and organized the work, Kavanagh should be commended for his efforts. The book is meticulously constructed, providing a resource that will become a standard for Great Plains research. For the Comanche people, scholars, or anyone interested in indigenous cultural traditions of the Southern Great Plains, *Comanche Ethnography* is vast in topical subject matter, exposing the complexity of Comanche cultural traditions. It is a piece of scholarship that brings the importance of field notes as a valuable cultural and scientific resource to the forefront. For Kavanagh, a scholar of Comanche ethnography and ethnohistory, the project was clearly a labor of love.

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**Comb Ridge and Its People: The Ethnohistory of a Rock.** By Robert S. McPherson. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009. 264 pages. \$26.95 paper.

Since the publication of Keith H. Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996), cultural anthropologists, ethnohistorians, and cultural geographers have experienced a growing appreciation for living landscapes. In *Comb Ridge and Its People: The Ethnohistory of a Rock*, Robert S. McPherson follows in this time-honored tradition, inviting the reader on a narrative journey through both time and place, including places that truly ignite the imagination, such as the massive alcoves within Comb Ridge that are reported to be the breathing holes of Arrow Head Big Snake, or Tl'iish K'aa'. Among the Navajo, this reptile is said to have flown through the air before becoming frozen into the rock formation now known as Comb Ridge (64–65). Although invisible from outer space, this "one-hundred-mile-long, two-hundred-foot-high, serrated cliff [that] cuts the sky" of southeast Utah is nevertheless noteworthy as the centerpiece of McPherson's new ethnohistory. To the question, "Is there more than a pamphlet to be written about the local history of the Comb Ridge and the people of southeastern Utah?" McPherson answers with a resounding yes (1). This text includes a table of contents, notes, bibliographic references, and index. There also is an extensive array of color photographs, black-and-white historic photographs, and a three-dimensional topographic map depicting the unique physiography that defines this portion of southeastern Utah situated east of Monument Valley and west of the Four Corners and Mesa Verde National Park.

Readers interested in the Southwest; archaeology; the ethnohistory of Paiutes, Navajos and Utes; the contact period; and the precursors to the

professionalization of archaeology within southeastern Utah will find great interest in this work. Furthermore, although the general public may find value in this as a regional historic account, specialists in anthropology, Native studies, heritage studies, and history will find McPherson's research especially beneficial.

McPherson uses two organizing principles throughout this nine-chapter book. First, what happened, and secondly, how the diverse cultural groups that have been engaged therein understand these events and the land. Living in the vicinity of Comb Ridge, McPherson has a personal and a professional investment in the discovery and representation of the prehistory, history, and contemporary developments of this region of southeastern Utah. Both a strength and weakness of this work, McPherson is deeply committed and connected to Comb Ridge and its vicinity. Assuming a diachronic perspective, McPherson provides a brief overview of the earliest known cultural traces within the archaeological record of Comb Ridge and progressively articulates the more recent Puebloan archaeology and lived histories of Paiutes, Utes, and Navajos. *Comb Ridge and Its People* explores the lives of Anglo tomb raiders euphemistically named "cultural prospectors," cowboys, miners, and Mormons.

McPherson's reportage on the prehistory of Comb Ridge appears to be shaped largely by the federally funded Bureau of Land Management project that preceded the writing of this book. Discussion of the Paleo-Indian inhabitants (12,000–6000 BCE) centers around the brief discussion of nine isolated Clovis points identified in San Juan County, followed by a passing acknowledgment of the Folsom (9000–8000 BCE) and Plano cultures (8000–6000 BCE) "identified by a few fragments" in southeastern Utah. McPherson presents an argument for continuity between the Paleo-Indian cultures and the Archaic (6000–1000 BCE), with the latter being represented by twenty archaic sites within the Comb Ridge area, one of which was reportedly abandoned for four thousand years. McPherson also teases readers with claims of the Basket Makers arrival through migration rather than *in situ* development but notes that the sites used as the basis of this claim were "heavily disturbed" (35–37).

McPherson provides a more protracted discussion of the ancestral Puebloan or Anasazi culture, discussing findings from Basket Makers II (1000 BCE–450 CE) through Pueblo IV (1300–1600 CE), of which the Pax Chaco period of the Pueblo II period (900–1150 CE) is particularly intriguing (36–37). What was the relationship between the Comb Ridge and Bluff areas and Chaco Canyon? Why is there a complete absence of defense fortifications at this time? Discussions of the subterranean ceremonial kivas and the Pueblo emergence story, the great houses of the Pueblo II period, and the prehistoric system of trails and roads within the greater Comb Ridge and Bluff areas present fleeting glimpses into the ancient Puebloan ceremonial and socio-economic life worlds that are, by turns, alluring and instructive.

Perhaps in part this cultural allure has contributed to McPherson's disquieting assertion that degradation extends to "virtually every sheltered site in San Juan County" (37). Treated largely as a resource available for the taking, nineteenth-century figures such as Platte D. Lyman, Benjamin Perkins,

and Charles McLoyd reportedly were among those who actively engaged in procuring artifacts for personal gain (160, 163). Today Albert R. Lyman's 1931 comment that "someday the public would view those who [disfigured the buildings and rifled the treasure chambers] as savages" rings eerily prophetic (202). Given an historic record characterized by repeated incidents of archaeological and cultural degradation, perhaps it is fair to ask ourselves, should we as scholars and writers make information about these sites publically available, or do we have a responsibility to follow Numic models of knowledge dissemination wherein information must be earned, rather than preemptively granted to all interested parties?

McPherson should be commended in his efforts to represent the unique cultural perspectives of indigenous and immigrant populations who currently and historically occupied the Comb Ridge area through narrative and descriptive accounts. His depictions of the historic personages, places, and events are particularly well articulated. Demonstrating a strong tie to Navajo communities, McPherson presents oral histories emanating from Navajo sources that are discerning and incisive. Cultural representative Ada Brown, for example, explains that the pictographs of Comb Ridge still hold power. This power emanates from artisans who studied nature's powers and transferred this power into the symbolic images found in pottery and pictographs (155). Although relaying less information about the Paiutes and Utes, who have even deeper precontact, historic, and contemporary connections to this region, McPherson nevertheless provides a thorough treatment of the historic events surrounding the life of Posey, a Southern Paiute who actively resisted nineteenth-century encroachment. Born at Navajo Mountain (Paiute Mountain among the Paiute), Posey, like others of his day, including Queho, Mouse, and Ahvote, endeavored to stave off the massive resource and cultural losses that accompanied the arrival of immigrant populations into the traditional territories of the Paiutes. In a similar vein, McPherson discusses key historic events surrounding the Mormon settlement of this region.

McPherson does not shy away from providing a full exposition of conflicts associated with the economic development of this region, particularly the resource pressures that accompanied the use of these lands for livestock grazing. Despite, or perhaps because of, his close relationship to the region, however, McPherson is reluctant to wade too deeply into the cultural contests that currently characterize this little corner of God's paradise. Nevertheless, McPherson does share a wide array of local interpretations of nature; expositions and arguments of how the physical environment should be used; and what our individual and collective responsibilities are toward the lived world today inhabited by Paiutes, Navajos, Utes, and postcontact communities including Mormons. What does the future hold? Will these lands be opened to multiple parties and uses or will environmental stewardship and heritage management concerns preside? According to McPherson, "Much has been said and much more will be said about his rock and its people" (217).

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