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REVIEW ESSAY

Roots of Resistance: Champagne's *American Indian Societies*

THOMAS D. HALL

American Indian Societies: Strategies and Conditions of Political and Cultural Survival. By Duane Champagne. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival (Volume 32 in Cultural Survival's Report Series), 1989. \$19.95 Cloth. \$10.00 Paper.

American Indian Societies is a significantly enlarged version of Cultural Survival Report 21 issued in December 1985 under the current subtitle. I note this because the casual scanner of titles might mistake it for a simple repackaging of an earlier publication.

This expanded and reorganized publication requires a four-pronged review strategy. First, Champagne's analysis must be located in current controversies in sociology. Second, the intellectual growth of the author and, more importantly, his contribution to bridging controversies need to be highlighted. Third, an assessment is needed of the work as it is. Finally, the preceding three approaches indicate the value of a positive critique that points the way to future revisions, emendations, and expansions of research on Indian cultural and political survival. The first two are, I hope, useful to readers of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* because of their disciplinary diversity and, I presume, because of an interest in the intellectual qualities of the journal's editor. The third prong is a standard review. The fourth

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approach is implied by the previous three and is justified by the importance of the topic. Let me anticipate my punchline. This is a work well worth the time spent reading it. I find it sound, yet provocative, and have decided to use it in my course "Native Peoples of North America."

Champagne is staking out a position in the continuing debate between conflict-materialist and functional-ideational approaches to sociological theory. In caricature these two camps argue over whether modes of intergroup conflict or intergroup cooperation are the driving forces behind social change and stability. During the 1960s and 1970s, conflict-based theories (varieties of Marxism, political-economy, dependency theory, etc.) became dominant over functionalist theories (varieties of modernization theory, structural-functionalism, etc.). In the late 1980s, functionalism began a bit of a resurgence.¹ Within that trend there has been a re-examination of the importance of social differentiation in social change.²

Conflict-materialist theories approach the issue of social change—survival and adaptation of Native American societies in the face of the European onslaught is one very significant manifestation of social change—by examining the material foundations of society: how people make a living, how they produce material goods, how they exchange those goods, how various groups come to have, maintain, and enhance their advantages in these processes over the opposition of other groups. The analysis can proceed at several levels: within the group (tribe), between groups (tribes), or between entirely different types of groups (tribes versus states, or, here, Indians versus Europeans). Sophisticated analyses examine all three types of relationships.

Functionalists begin by examining how society is organized and how it functions, stressing various kinds of social relations, and how and to what degree they are institutionalized in various societies. Functionalists study the kinship relations, political relations, ideological relations (including, but not restricted to, religion), military relations, and sometimes economic relations. Like the more sophisticated materialist-conflict theorists, sophisticated functionalists examine the interrelations among all these spheres. When applied to social change, the general argument is that different configurations of these processes have different potentials for adaptation and survival. Specifically, the more differentiated and more institutionalized each of these spheres

is, the better able a society is to adapt to changing conditions. That is, the more differentiated the kinship, the polity, the economy, the religion, the better able a society is to adapt to changing conditions.

Champagne's analysis of the political and cultural survival of American Indian societies is firmly rooted in this approach. He seeks to examine systematically a sample of American Indian societies in order to sort out—in specific, historical detail—how and why some groups survived with substantial cultural persistence while others did not. He explicitly focuses on the kind and degree of differentiation, and the institutionalization of that differentiation, in various spheres of each society. For the first version of *American Indian Societies*, this characterization could end here. However, the current version is more elaborate.

Champagne approaches social differentiation from several points of view drawn from three different kinds of Indian-European contact: geopolitical environment, world system, and cultural-normative interpenetration. Geopolitical environment refers to “competition, hegemony, and direct administrative domination” (p. 5). Basically, this means locating Indian-European contact within the context of European political rivalries. World system, in Champagne's usage, refers to incorporation into European trading circuits, notably the fur trade, but at times including slave trade and, more recently, energy resources. Cultural-normative interpenetration refers to how contact with Europeans “made members of indigenous societies aware of alternate world views, political organizations, religions, and social mores” (p. 8).

This tripartite division of types of contact combines the levels of analysis of the conflict-materialist group with those of functional analysis. Geopolitical environment is a way of describing the political aspect of the global context of contact, emphasizing the political in the political-economy of international relations. World system is a way of describing the economic aspect of the global context of contact, emphasizing the economy in the political-economy of international relations. Cultural-normative interpenetration focuses on lower, or more immediate, levels of contact and nonmaterial aspects of interaction. It is at this level that indigenous levels of social differentiation, adaptation, and survival shape subsequent social differentiation. It is also at this level that Indians were able to influence processes, since the other two levels were largely beyond their control.

Here it becomes apparent that Champagne has grown intellectually and that he has contributed substantially to converting a "dialogue of the deaf" between the two theoretical camps into a conversation. At the higher or more macro level, Champagne is drawing on the insights of world-system theory³ to contextualize his analyses of social differentiation. His approach is insightful in that he selects cases to facilitate comparison of the adaptation and survival among different Indian groups (which he calls nations) within broadly similar geopolitical environmental and world system contexts. This analytic strategy serves to contain, if not eliminate, the bickering between the two contending theoretical camps by holding the key variables and processes of one camp (conflict-materialist) constant while examining the key variables and processes of the other camp (functionalist social differentiation). Before assessing how successful this strategy is, I will recapitulate Champagne's analysis.

Champagne's introductory chapter reviews his theoretical premises and argument. For those conversant with the controversies discussed above, this is the logical starting point. Those not entirely comfortable with these issues should go through the case material in the five substantive chapters, then return to the theoretical discussion. The substantive chapters are organized regionally, beginning with the Northeast (Iroquois and Delaware), moving through the Southeast (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek), to the Plains (Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Northern Arapaho), the Southwest (Quechan and Navajo), to the Northwest (Tlingit). These discussions are followed by a brief recapitulation of Indian social movements, emphasizing the twentieth century. Each of the chapters presents a brief, at times telegraphic, history of each group focusing on the three dimensions of analysis, and concludes with a comparison and assessment of the argument. For readers familiar with the case materials, the historical summaries will, no doubt, seem too brief. They are, however, cogent and to the point. The chapter conclusions are cumulative in the sense that the findings of each chapter are used to illuminate subsequent chapters. Those who initially skipped the theory chapter should return to it after reading these chapters. The case material will make the illustrations intelligible and informative and will illuminate the theoretical argument.

The book concludes with an analytic chapter that reorganizes the case material by type of society: decentralized and nondiffer-

entiated societies, societies with mythically defined pan-societal orders, solidary societies with differentiated polities. Champagne is clever in his comparisons in that he does not simply use societies; he recognizes the processes of historical change they experience.⁴ He points out that the Tlingit, for example, fall into different categories before and after 1912, when the Alaska National Brotherhood was founded.

Decentralized and nondifferentiated societies, also called segmentary societies, do best when they are relatively free from administrative regulation, retain their subsistence base, are somewhat incorporated into the market system, experience external threats to their autonomy severe enough to prompt changes, and have developed groups or classes who advocate further differentiation of the polity from kinship and other social spheres. These conditions are, however, not sufficient to bring about change. He further notes that most of the changes he describes would have been very unlikely without strong external pressure. The structures of societies with mythically defined pan-societal orders and solidary societies with differentiated polities seem to work in opposite directions: "Societies with collective religious orientations were capable of mobilizing community action for protecting cultural and political interests, but were resistant to adopting institutions of increased political differentiation" (p. 145). What is not stated explicitly but is quite clear is that within this comparative strategy, the social differentiation approach must be taken seriously, even if it is not yet entirely convincing. Champagne draws his conclusions close to the evidence. Consequently, he never specifies clearly what conditions, or sets of conditions, will insure survival and adaptation. This is an intellectually honest reading of the data, but it is unsatisfying.

The lack of firm, clearly stated conclusions underscores the point that this is really a "work in progress," not a finished product. If a later revision shows as much development as this one does with respect to the first version, it will become a formidable piece of work. There are several directions further development might take. Broadly, these could include providing further comparisons and/or addressing further issues.

In general, comparisons of confrontations between nonstate societies and state societies (the strategy Champagne uses, in abstract terms) might be extended to include societies outside North America. Politically, this would be congruent with the overall

goals of the publisher, *Cultural Survival*, which is concerned with the persistence of native peoples globally. Theoretically, such an expansion of case studies would allow more variation in comparisons, but at the cost of lessening direct comparability at the more macro level. One specific suggestion would be to compare the concept of segmentary societies with models developed by Sahlins and Kelly.⁵ Sahlins drew his initial model of segmentary lineages from the Nuer, and Kelly studied Nuer-Dinka conflicts in Africa in considerable depth. Both would enrich and deepen the analysis.

Several additional concerns could be addressed. Implicit in the current analysis is the issue of relative size. On the one hand, it is easier to build solidarity among smaller groups than larger ones, all other things being equal. On the other hand, at any given level of technological development, state societies require a significantly larger population base than segmentary societies in order to survive. The world system contextual component would benefit from an explicit recognition of world system time. There are two points here. First, there is compelling evidence of political, military, and economic cycles in the world system.⁶ Exactly when contact occurs in terms of these cycles is a significant contextual factor for subsequent reactions. Second, the world system itself has evolved, or changed, through time. So not only have geopolitical environments changed from, say, the early eighteenth century to the twentieth century, but the structure and functioning of the world system has changed significantly.

Other topics that could be addressed—as with the others, there are hints and implicit comments in this direction—are the role and consequences of gender differences. Recent work on the relationships between gender stratification, political differentiation, and social evolution suggests that there is a great deal to be learned about modern gender roles and relationships by re-examining the development of the state from nonstate societies.⁷ Since many of the groups Champagne discusses are positioned on the brink of this transition, there may be a great deal to be learned by explicitly examining this issue.

A final topic that could be addressed is the general role of religion as a means of resisting or at least coping with severe external threats. Champagne discusses religious movements among the Delaware, Iroquois, and others. Further insight into such

movements might be gained by comparing them to other, contemporary fundamentalist trends. One interpretation of these movements is that they are a form of "dependency control," by which Third World societies not only curtail economic exploitation, but also reject the imposition of Western cultural values. Iran comes immediately to mind.⁸ Religion is an area where the world systemic context intersects, in complex ways, with cultural-normative interpenetration. Comparative studies of religion would serve to broaden the base of this volume by including native societies outside of North America.

No reviewer could seriously require Champagne to address all these issues carefully in one book. Some, however, could be noted and others addressed at least briefly. It is a mark of *American Indian Societies'* success that such important questions are raised by the author's analysis. In summary, the book is best viewed as another round in an ongoing dialogue among social scientists. This makes it incomplete but provocative. Its contributions are that it bridges gaps and promotes careful rethinking of past interpretations. It leaves one with a clear sense that whatever Champagne writes next will be interesting, insightful, and worth reading. This is no mean accomplishment for such a slim book.

NOTES

1. A recent example can be found in *American Sociological Review*, which recently (vol. 55, no. 3, June 1990) published a previously unknown paper by Talcott Parsons, a leading functionalist theorist ("Prolegomena to a Theory of Social Institutions," pp. 319-33). The paper is introduced by Charles Camic ("An Historical Prologue," pp. 313-19), and includes commentary by James Coleman (pp. 333-39) and Jeffrey Alexander (pp. 339-45), a leading exponent of neo-functionalism.

2. See Jeffrey Alexander and Paul Colomy, eds., *Differentiation Theory and Social Change: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), especially the introduction by Alexander (pp. 1-15) and the conclusion by Colomy (pp. 465-95). See also Champagne's essay, "Culture, Differentiation, and Environment: Social Change in Tlingit Society" (pp. 52-87), especially the introductory essay.

3. *World-system*, when used in the Wallersteinian sense, is hyphenated, whereas in general use it is not. The roots of this convention are explained in William R. Thompson, "Introduction: World System Analysis With and Without the Hyphen," in *Contending Approaches to World System Analysis*, ed. William R. Thompson (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983), 7-24. For an overview of the

relationship of world-system theory to Native Americans, see Thomas D. Hall, "Native Americans and Incorporation: Patterns and Problems," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 11:2(1987): 1-30.

4. For a discussion of various comparative strategies, see Philip McMichael, "Incorporating Comparison within a World-Historical Perspective: An Alternative Comparative Method," *American Sociological Review* 55:3(June 1990): 385-97.

5. Marshall D. Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist* 63:2(April 1961): 332-45; Raymond C. Kelly, *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

6. See Terry Boswell, "Colonial Empires and the Capitalist World-System: A Time Series Analysis of Colonization, 1640-1960," *American Sociological Review* 54:2(April 1989): 180-96; Christopher Chase-Dunn, *Global Formation: Structures of the World-Economy* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989); and Joshua Goldstein, *Long Cycles: Prosperity and War in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

7. See Irene Silverblatt, "Women in States," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 17(1988): 427-60, for an overview of the issue. Christine Gailey develops the same theme in *Kinship to Kingship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

8. See Shahin Gerami's insightful "Religious Fundamentalism and Foreign Dependency," *Social Compass* 36:4(December 1989): 451-67. In "Export Alliance as a Device of Dependence Control" *Social Science Quarterly* 66:1(March 1985): 105-19, Gerami also suggests that OPEC and other resource cartels are a form of "dependency control."