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The Crow and the Eagle: A Tribal History from Lewis and Clark to Custer. By Keith Algier.

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Everything from regional pre-nineteenth-century regional society, including camp life, religion, social and economic structure, and migratory cycles, receives appropriate recognition. Another series of chapters offers similar coverage for trappers' activities. Interrelationships among trappers and their tribal associates stand out clearly in this carefully organized presentation. Stern carefully analyzes the cultural differences that provoked clashes and hostility between trappers and their suppliers and examines the trading preferences of regional tribes that needed to be accommodated to develop a successful joint economy. An excellent synthesis—essential for a sound treatment of interior northwest fur trade history—results from this multicultural approach. Stern's expert investigation gives the reader a superior grasp of Indian cultural preservation, modified by acculturation resulting from fur trade experience.

One problem occurs in the index: Page numbers are inaccurate. Each index page number has to be reduced by thirteen in order to obtain references that correspond to actual text pages. In any event, *Chiefs and Chief Traders* has great merit.

*Merle Wells*

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**The Crow and the Eagle: A Tribal History from Lewis and Clark to Custer.** By Keith Algier. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1993. 326 pages. \$14.95 paper.

At the time of white contact in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Crow homeland extended over the Yellowstone River drainage, including roughly the southern quarter of Montana and the northern two-thirds of Wyoming. Keith Algier dedicates *The Crow and the Eagle: A Tribal History from Lewis and Clark to Custer* to an "examination and analysis of the United States government's displacement of the Crow" from this homeland (p. xiii). In a detailed and well-documented manner, he traces the establishment of Euro-American economic and military influence in Crow territory.

Algier describes the almost constant pressure on Crow society after the early 1800s when their land's economic potential became known to Euro-American businessmen and investment interests. His emphasis on economic factors determining white interest in

Crow lands is particularly interesting. Whereas the military aspects of nineteenth-century Indian history stir the popular imagination, the economic forces behind the military actions are often overlooked. For example, in his concise but descriptive overview of the many trappers who traded in Crow country, Algier ties the efforts of these trappers to eastern financial interests, a subject that is often neglected by historians who tend to portray the trappers as somehow independent of eastern influence. The discussion of Manuel Lisa's efforts to obtain capital is particularly illustrative, as is Algier's attribution of the interruption of the beaver trade in 1813 not to the usual reasons of Blackfoot hostility but to the drop in prices caused by the War of 1812 (pp. 51–52).

Similarly, Algier effectively explains the economic and political position of the white residents of nineteenth-century Montana in regard to their Indian neighbors. He is particularly concerned with the white residents of Bozeman, Montana, who had close economic ties with the government agencies serving the Crow.

Algier details the graft and corruption of Indian Service employees and Montana businessmen who profited from Crow annuity contracts. He sorts through the various charges and countercharges, bringing some clarity to a confusing situation. The results were very clear: The Crow received inferior rations and supplies, while Bozeman businessmen such as Nelson Story and Fellows D. Pease grew rich (pp. 305–306). Algier's stories of graft and petty larceny gleaned from the pages of the overtly biased Bozeman newspaper, *Avant Courier* (owned by a bitter rival of Nelson Story) are classics in the long list of injustices suffered by the Crow people.

The Crow suffered from more than Euro-American intrusion. Due to white pressure and the dramatic reduction of the buffalo herds, there was increasing conflict between the Crow and their neighbors. The complex process of compromise and conflict, peace negotiations and intertribal warfare reduced Crow lands drastically. Because Crow lands were home to some of the last buffalo herds, competition for hunting rights in this territory caused continual strife. Comparatively recent conflict with powerful groups such as the Dakota overlapped with traditional hostility towards the Blackfoot alliance and other neighbors. Tribal territorial disputes bound the Crow in "ever-constricting circles" and threatened their survival (p. 166).

Although Algier's interpretation of white motives and intertribal politics is perceptive, his discussion of Indian activities in

relation to white actions ignores factors internal to Indian society. For Algier, the Crow rarely initiated any action except destructive intertribal warfare. Despite a growing interest in the historical reconstruction of Indian life, Algier chooses to present his history of the Crow from a predominantly Euro-American political and military point of view. Although he occasionally presents the Crow perspective, as in Arapooish's (Rotten Belly) elegant description of Crow territory, Algier writes principally about white concerns. This stress on white actions and interests over Crow action and cultural change is an indication of his tendency to discuss what was done to the Crow rather than what the Crow did to resist Euro-American domination. Algier does Crow and Montana history a service by clarifying and organizing the history of military, United States government, and local business relations with the Crow; however interesting (or appalling) these aspects are, though, a tribal history by definition must record Crow actions and interpretations. The problem is apparent even in the book's title. The period of Crow history under discussion is defined not in relation to time (as in nineteenth-century) or to events in Crow society, but by United States government activities (Lewis and Clark and Custer). Perhaps this problem could have been avoided by describing *The Crow and the Eagle* not as a tribal history but as a history of Euro-American domination of the Crow homeland, told from a Euro-American perspective.

Another unfortunate distortion is the implication that Crow culture was destroyed. Crow culture was in a state of change throughout its long history. Crow reactions to Euro-American culture can be seen as one more adjustment in a constantly growing and changing society. When Algier writes "that the Crow way of life was rapidly drawing to a close," he is equating the buffalo hunt and tribal warfare with Crow culture (p. 370). These were certainly aspects of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Crow life, but the destruction of the buffalo did not end Crow cultural growth. Algier reduces the tremendous stress in nineteenth-century Crow culture to a "diminishing" of the "warrior ethic" and dependence on external forces for material needs and military security (p. 336). Rather than portraying the Crow as actively making the best decisions possible under very difficult circumstances, Algier shows them as passive and helpless, perhaps even at fault because they "had come to depend on external forces" to fulfill their needs (p. 336).

The unfortunate exclusion of women from this tribal history also distorts the portrayal of Crow culture. The Crow were a matrilineal society in which women enjoyed relative equality with men. They owned the lodges, controlled the distribution of food, had a great deal of personal autonomy, and made their political and military opinions known. The omission of this information is especially unfortunate in light of recent interest and scholarship concerning Indian women. The importance of Indian women in trade, for example, is well documented in Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (1980).

Another small but important point concerns the title, *The Crow and the Eagle*. This title suggests that the tribal name refers to the bird of that name. However, although present-day Crow use this Anglicized form of their name, the original name, Apsaruke (spellings vary), did not refer to the bird we call the crow. In *The Crow Indians*, Robert H. Lowie explained that the name *Crow* was derived from a mistranslation, *Gens de Corbeaux*. Apsaruke referred to a bird that was reportedly no longer found in the area; it did not refer to the crow.

Overall, however, *The Crow and the Eagle* is an important addition to the neglected field of Crow history. Algier describes the situation within which the Crow struggled to maintain their way of life and cultural identity. His detailed and well-documented discussion of white activity is essential to an understanding of the nineteenth-century Crow predicament. In the creation of a tribal history, however, a sequel might be helpful, detailing the same time period from a Crow cultural perspective, much as James Axtell has so effectively written for the Iroquois. As yet, no one has incorporated the large body of ethnographic information that exists on the nineteenth-century Crow into a historical context to illustrate and explain Crow cultural change and adaptation. Such a tribal history could answer a need felt by many ethnic and racial groups interested in how best to preserve their cultures under increasing pressures. A unique and adaptive people, the Crow survived and prospered in a situation that most informed nineteenth-century observers saw as hopeless. The history of this struggle has much to offer all of us.