

the government with the information they both needed to make a meaningful decision about the land" (p. xi). What is unfortunate from an academic point of view is not the role he selected but that he chose not to subject his strategy to careful analysis.

To borrow a line from its title, this book is an "incomplete victory in applied anthropology." It lacks both a detailed analysis of the applied anthropological strategy employed, as well as discussion of the wider theoretical implication of the project.

This book is useful for its description of events but not as a contribution to the literature on applied anthropology.

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REFERENCES

Clifton, James A.

1970 Applied Anthropology: Readings in the Uses of the Sciences of Man. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co.

Paul C. Thistle: Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986.

The intent of the author of this slim, narrowly focussed book is to explicate the history of cultural contact between the Western Woods Cree and traders for the Hudson's Bay and other companies, in the delimited geographical region between Cumberland House and The Pas in Manitoba, between the mid-seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. An adaptation of a Master's thesis, this work is a valuable case study for those interested more generally in the fur trade in the North American subarctic as well as in how ethnohistorical methodology can illuminate cultural processes. Thistle's particular brand of ethnohistory depends almost exclusively on documentary sources--and heavily on the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company--and is informed by anthropological approaches to economic exchange and mercantilism.

The book consists of four chapters. The first two discuss the period of "early contact" from 1611 to 1773, the third the

"competitive fur trade era" from 1774 to 1820, and the last the first two decades of the period of trading company monopoly. In 1840, the date which marks the conclusion of the analysis, Church Missionary Society missionaries arrived. Thistle argues that throughout this 200-year period, the Western Woods Cree were not significantly affected by the trade and did not become dependent upon it. Indeed, to some extent, Thistle states, the Europeans who sought to extend their mercantilistic enterprises over the Indians--and who in most instances eventually succeeded in doing so--themselves became dependent on Indian provisioners, guides, canoe-makers, interpreters, and trappers, who provided the rationale for the exchange. In arguing thusly, Thistle joins many other scholars who, over the past twenty years, have called for more balanced assessments of Indian roles in the history of European-Indian interactions. He also adds his voice to those who have argued recently, against received wisdom, that subarctic Indian cultures did not all suddenly undergo substantial structural change when European fur-traders arrived and that Indians did not all automatically and rapidly become dependent or forget how to use (or make) traditional technology.

So much for the general thesis, with which I have no substantial disagreement, and if Thistle had stopped here, this review would have been nothing but complimentary. However, Thistle often overstates his case in this book. He throws caution to the wind and risks losing sight of the complexity and substantial variation within any single population of Indian reactions to the trade (although at least twice he acknowledges the dangers of overgeneralization). In the chapters on early contact, for example, Thistle, following Cornelius Jaenen in part, contends that the Western Woods Cree did not assume that Europeans were superior beings; that alliance, reciprocity, and partnership were important aspects of trade relationships; that dependency must be clearly defined; that a heightened value of goods traded need not necessarily indicate heightened dependence; that certain statements regarding "cultural amnesia"--not using a bow and arrow for example--should be examined critically; and

that we must attempt to understand (as Mary Black-Rogers has in a recent analysis in Ethnohistory) the rhetoric of trade language.

While these are all admirable points to argue and develop, in these same chapters, Thistle also shows some inconsistency and confusion. He confuses, for instance, the trade of provisions at the post and subsequent dependent requests for provisions by starving Indians, who were not necessarily the same in both cases, with reciprocal and symbiotic understandings. Furthermore, Thistle accounts for the attack in 1712 on Jeremie's men by finding the latter guilty of failing to share food, without considering critically other cases where lack of sharing at posts did not lead to bloodshed. He argues for Cree independence, and while there may have been independence from the Hudson's Bay Company, both the degree of dependence on (or independence from) the French, and therefore the total degree of dependence, are difficult to ascertain. Thistle also argues that because middlemen were not trapping, they were independent, which seems to beg the question of how much these people were caught up in and affected by the trade. Dependence needs to be defined closely, to be set against interdependence rather than independence, and to be distinguished conceptually from dependency (I would argue). Thistle also draws a distinction between what he calls "core" society and culture that is quite confusing and uses terms like "significant" and "minimal adjustments" without precision. Finally, he seems not to consider seriously the considerable gulf between the Home Guard and the hinterland or upland--sometimes, "backwash"--Cree, or between various groups of Chipewyans in a brief discussion of these Athapaskan people.

The third chapter, which focuses on the "competitive fur trade era"--a bit misleading because there had also been competition in the early fur trade era--discusses interethnic relations during the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth. During this period, Crees were aggressive, demanded tribute, transported goods--suggesting a deep involvement in the trade--constructed canoes, demanded

alcohol and higher prices for their labour, played English off against Canadians, incorporated Iroquois and Freemen into their territory and society, and died from a variety of introduced diseases. Thistle argues unconvincingly in this chapter for continued independence or, at the most, for a "symbiotic" relationship--even going so far as to say that because Cree may not have regarded the dole of food in time of starvation as a dependent act, it was not. It seems clear, however, that because of the presence of the trade, many Crees died, some became totally dependent on food supplied at the post when starving, and some altered their lifestyles to maximize participation in trade-related activities; some also, one can fully admit, remained aloof.

The last chapter is on the first twenty years of the monopoly that resulted from the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. During this period, Crees received nets, ammunition, potatoes and fish, barley, and other goods; beaver populations became depleted; and, according to Thistle, the Cree of this region continued to have symbiotic relationships with Whites. Crees responded to the trade, he says, by a "'principle of least effort' strategy" and followed "Zen road to affluence" philosophy (simply put, desires are limited as is the expenditure of energy), ideas initially made popular by Marshall Sahlins but repeated here ad nauseam.

Although critical of this work, I have also tried to be constructive. Although I dispute some of Thistle's particular attempts to support his thesis, I do not argue with the general importance of that thesis. As a result of the trade, both dependence and interdependence, symbiosis and parasitism eventually developed. While it is important to generalize about the trade, we ought to eschew simple explanations, whether they focus on dependence, interdependence, or any other single factor. This is a thought-provoking book, a serious attempt to construct an ethnohistory of the Western Woods Cree of this region over a 200-year period. It deserves to be read.

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