

The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West

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The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West, by Jennifer Graber. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. xxii, 288 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. \$29.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Michael Knock is associate professor of history at Clarke University in Dubuque, Iowa. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Notre Dame, 1996) was "'Alone with Sitting Bull's People': The Dakota Indian Mission of the Congregational Church, 1870-1937."

According to Jennifer Graber, religion played a key role in the dispossession of American Indians. Protestant and Catholic efforts to convert the native peoples of the American West to their respective faiths went hand-in-hand with the movement to take their lands and transform them into small independent farmers. That part of Graber's story is not surprising to anyone familiar with President Grant's so-called Peace Policy and other events in the nineteenth-century history of the American West. What is interesting, however, is her contention that native peoples also used spirituality to survive, sometimes by clinging to traditional beliefs and sometimes by showing a remarkable flexibility in their willingness to adapt those beliefs to a changing world.

Graber's focus is on the Kiowa of the southern Great Plains. The history of the Kiowa is one of regular adaptation. Before migrating south, she argues, the Kiowa adopted the Sun Dance from the Crow. They later began to practice some elements of Christianity while continuing to celebrate the Sun Dance and other ceremonies critical to their identity as a people. As Graber writes, "Ritual practices that engaged sacred power played a crucial role in that persistence. Kiowas came to churches, peyote meetings, and Feather Dance circles. They drew near to the gods of Indian Country. They asked to be sustained within, if not delivered from, an increasingly perilous situation" (201).

To tell the Kiowas' story, Graber focuses on the nineteenth century, beginning her story in 1803 and ending it in 1903. That structure allows her to describe the Kiowas' first encounter with white Americans following the Louisiana Purchase and to end with allotment. In between, the world of the Kiowa was completely transformed by events including the Red River War, the aforementioned Peace Policy, Richard Henry Pratt's attempt to "kill the Indian and save the man" at his Carlisle Indian School, and the Ghost Dance movement.

Of particular interest to students of Iowa and the Midwest may be the story of an Iowa Quaker named Lawrie Tatum. Tatum arrived in Kiowa country in May 1869 after being appointed reservation agent. In that capacity, Tatum was also an agent of civilization and Christianization. Graber reports that the young Quaker often grew frustrated by the Kiowas' insistence that they continue to celebrate the Sun Dance and

to raid other tribes. In response, Tatum sometimes withheld rations, including sugar. In a letter to his Quaker superiors in 1870, he declared, "I did it to punish them and . . . I believe it had a very salutary effect upon them. They have not appeared to be nearer conquered since I have been here than they did on that day" (89).

Graber skillfully uses a variety of sources, including Kiowa calendar drawings and shield art, enabling her to reveal Kiowa hopes and fears. Those sources also reveal the process of assimilation and cultural survival. For example, toward the end of her story, Graber analyzes a fascinating letter written to a Kiowa student at the Carlisle Indian School from his family on the reservation. The letter used a combination of symbols and drawings to deliver news of Christianity's presence on the reservation, the local peyote society, and pieces of family news (199–200).

Overall, *The Gods of Indian Country* is a welcome addition to the scholarship on American Indian spirituality as well the history of nineteenth-century U.S. Indian policy on the southern plains.

Power and Progress on the Prairie: Governing People on Rosebud Reservation, by Thomas Biolsi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. xxii, 340 pp. Maps, graphs, tables, illustrations, notes, index. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Harvey Markowitz is associate professor of anthropology at Washington and Lee University. He is the author of *Converting the Rosebud: Catholic Mission and the Lakotas, 1886–1916* (2018).

During the past three decades, a sizeable portion of anthropologist-ethnohistorian Thomas Biolsi's scholarship has focused on political, economic, and jurisdictional issues affecting the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Lakota Reservations of South Dakota. In *Organizing the Lakota* (1993), Biolsi analyzed why the Oglala and Sicangu Lakotas of those reservations ultimately voted to formalize their political life under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and how that decision further politically factionalized their populations and diminished their tribes' power over reservation affairs. In *Deadliest Enemies* (2001), he demonstrated the various ways federal courts have systematically posed the interests of Rosebud Indian against those of non-Indians in neighboring counties, thus exacerbating racial tensions between the two groups.

In his latest effort, *Power and Progress on the Prairie*, Biolsi again returns to the Rosebud Reservation and its surrounding South Dakota counties to explore how federal officials, local bureaucrats, and social experts collaborated on programs of directed change that they believed would improve the lives of the state's Indians and non-Indians and the often destructive consequences of those initiatives. As he explains in his