

REVIEWS

Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690–1792

By Susan Sleeper-Smith

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Pp. xv, 348. Maps, illustrations, index. Clothbound, \$45.00; paperbound, \$27.95.)

Susan Sleeper-Smith's *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest* is a historical analysis of a region that deserves far more attention than it gets. Chapter 1 is unique in its details about historic indigenous agriculture and environment before European immigration. Chapter 2, challenging the "middle ground" thesis, contends that the region was economically and culturally diverse but stable when the French fur trade was introduced. Chapters 3 and 4 study the impact of Detroit's establishment as a core of the French fur trade. Here, the author argues that revitalized trade led to increased Native populations, as well as greater demand for women's agricultural work and fur-processing skills. As imperial power shifted toward the English in the region, Sleeper-Smith argues that the British

undervalued women's roles in the Ohio Valley's prosperity, which ultimately contributed to the eventual decline of the fur trade communities: Vincennes, Ouiatenon, Kethtippekanunk, and Miamitown. In Chapter 5 the author challenges assumptions about the detrimental role of the fur trade on Native life. She provides an excellent discussion of the trade in European cloth and how Native women drove that commerce, enhancing their authority and transforming Native dress. Chapters 6 and 7 revisit the military expansion of the new United States into the region; George Rogers Clark's violent and lawless Kentucky militia, Josiah Harmar, and Arthur St. Clair all appear. In these chapters, the study of Native women is limited. Sleeper-Smith brings women back into this military analysis by suggesting that Native

women and children were President George Washington's primary targets for capture. Finally, chapter 8 touches on many well-known events and figures: Fallen Timbers, Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa at Prophetstown, and the Battle of Tippecanoe. This final chapter demonstrates that this region and its communities, environments, and histories need to be revisited by scholars who can see further than the tropes of inevitable Indian demise and American conquest.

There are problems with this work that should be noted. The Ohio River Valley is a geographic region that stretches from western Pennsylvania to Illinois. The Indian women discussed in this book are, for the most part, from the Wabash River Valley and the trade towns located in proximity to that region—not the geographic expanses suggested by the title. Chapter 6 offers nothing new about the military campaigns against native tribes, and women are absent from the narrative. However, the author does

put forward an environmental focus on the intentional destruction of animals, crops, and towns by U.S. military forces. Her claim that this was a new tactic that Washington unleashed on the Native communities in the Ohio River Valley is problematic, as this was a long-held British practice within the colonies.

Without question, Sleeper-Smith's contribution to indigenous women's history and regional history during this period remains invaluable. Her archival sources, including archeological data and environmental studies, are expansive. She argues clearly and consistently that indigenous women were pivotal to the prosperity and success of Native communities in the region. Their authority, skills, and voices must be considered, and their continued absence in the histories of this region should be a serious warning sign.

DAWN G. MARSH is Associate Professor of History at Purdue University

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Unlikely General: "Mad" Anthony Wayne and the Battle for America

By Mary Stockwell

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The 1783 Treaty of Paris may have led to the formal end of hostilities between Great Britain and the United States, but no one at Versailles consulted the Indian tribes residing north of

the Ohio River. Winning the peace in the Northwest Territory proved much more difficult for the fledgling United States, as conflicting interests between land speculators, settler colonialists,