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Nature and History in the Potomac Country: From Hunter-Gatherers to the Age of Jefferson. By James D. Rice. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 360 pages. \$42.00 cloth.

Nature and History in the Potomac Country presents a rich, regional history that spans a millennium and ends right when most textbooks finally start to pay attention to the Potomac—during the life of George Washington and the founding of the US capital. To trace the history of such a long time span, one that saw subsistence patterns wax and wane, peoples form and disperse, and powers come and go, Rice has written “primarily an environmental history” peopled by Natives and colonists (xiii). His approach will force historians of Native America and colonial America to rethink traditional notions about historical periodization and colonial regions in the Southeast.

Rice presents three narrative strands in his book. The first—and arguably the most important—focuses on environmental changes and human adaptations to these changes. Rice’s tale keeps “deep-time environmental forces” at center stage (ix). The epochal events include a warming trend—the “medieval optimum”—that began in the eighth century and the subsequent “Little Ice Age” that began in the fourteenth century (12, 16). During the warming trend, Native communities became more reliant on new strains of corn in fits and spurts and as allowed by the expanded growing season. Rice is careful to emphasize the contingency and risks behind this process. The expansion of agriculture had the unintended consequence of expanding the population just on the cusp of a major cooling trend that limited its viability. When the growing season for corn shrank below the necessary 120 days in the cooler parts of the Potomac watershed, and especially in the upper portions of the Susquehanna River and in present-day central New York, it created new dislocations and altered the human landscape. People moved southward and toward lower elevations, prompting new patterns of trade, diplomacy, and warfare.

Rice avoids simple environmental determinism in this story by emphasizing that humans’ relationship to nature is inextricably tied to how people relate to one another, the book’s second narrative strand. As the climate cooled, war between the Iroquois and the Algonquians and new patterns of trade gave rise to new hierarchies in the Potomac: powerful, hereditary chiefdoms and paramount chiefdoms centered in fortified villages. Inhabitants above the Potomac’s fall line saw maize become so impractical and Iroquois raids and Algonquian counterraiders so threatening that they simply left, thus creating a void. English colonists avoided settling this area for more than a century, partially out of fear of getting caught in the crossfire. In a similar story of how power relations among people affect how they adapt to the environment,

English colonists' power over African slaves influenced their implementation of a plantation system of agriculture below the falls.

Rice explains that his interest in the Potomac's history originated when he wondered why colonial-era maps and archaeological evidence consistently suggested that the upper reaches of the Potomac were empty when the English arrived. It is his third narrative strand that answers this question most directly. Here Rice emphasizes the degree to which humans must adapt to the landscape created by their predecessors, and it provides *Nature and History in the Potomac Country's* most provocative findings. Suddenly, the history of colonization becomes one of continuity as much as one of transformation. The arrival of the English in the Chesapeake Bay area during the early seventeenth century fades in importance as a pivotal moment, replaced by precontact trends. By bringing a *longue durée*, environmental approach to the Potomac's history, Rice has answered Neal Salisbury's call of nearly fifteen years ago to pay greater heed to "the Indians' old world" in shaping post-1492 history ("The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1996, 435–58).

As Rice argues, colonists had to recognize and adapt to a regional, social, political, and ecological landscape that predated their arrival. These earlier patterns grew, in part, out of environmental changes and resulted in three distinct Potomac subregions: the inner coastal plain, the outer coastal plain, and the interior. As colonists adapted to this environmental and social landscape, they, in turn, "perpetuated the old three-part division" (241). They left the interior nearly vacant while the inner and outer coastal plains developed unique communities. In a sense, then, even as colonists destroyed Indian polities, the human geography created by Iroquoians and Algonquians still "governed the timing, extent, and character of colonization" (255). Only after the treaties of Albany (1722) and Lancaster (1744) did the Germans and Scots-Irish flood into the interior and transform the Potomac as greatly as did the indigenous shift to agriculture and the adjustment to the Little Ice Age. Soil and sediment analysis shows that it took until the 1740s for colonists to instigate the process of environmental degradation that continued at least into the twentieth century.

Rice ably overcomes the most daunting challenges in writing a history that bridges the periods before and after the arrival of Europeans. Too many histories of Indian-white relations during the early period of European colonization still open with a short, almost perfunctory, chapter on Indians in "prehistory" in order to set the stage for the history that followed once Europeans arrived. In contrast, Rice devotes three chapters to the history of the Potomac before the arrival of the English. Granted, these chapters cover approximately nine hundred years, while the remaining ten chapters cover approximately two

hundred years. The large climatic changes, the rise of agriculture, and the early transformations in Indians societies that took place over centuries all receive the same space as decades' worth of events after 1607. Nonetheless, Rice conveys the momentousness of the changes between 700 and 1600 with as much detail as his sources will allow. By his own admission, he relies on "imagination," with a "willingness to speculate and even to be wrong," when he tries to give these early centuries as much of a human face as possible (8). He invites the reader to play the role of visitor and paddle a canoe up the Potomac and its tributaries while he introduces the inhabitants. To do otherwise would be to write history "without considering how individuals felt, smelled, and saw the world they moved through, [which] disregards their humanity" (22). Daily life in the Potomac for an Englishman during the eighteenth century is vividly described. Although Rice's central focus is broad patterns of subsistence and market relations practiced by the English, he gives these a lively spin by extrapolating from the lives of individuals who left behind detailed writings about their daily lives.

Rice has set an example that historians of regions beyond the Potomac will hopefully follow. Specialists in Native American, colonial American, and environmental history will all profit from reading this book. Rice leaves little doubt that the Potomac watershed had a unique history within Virginia, Maryland, or the "southern colonies." Even today, inhabitants of the Potomac live with the legacy of a history set in motion well before the arrival of John Smith. Reading the book makes one wonder about its subtitle. How much was the turn of the nineteenth century really the age of Jefferson or even the age of Washington?

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The Navajo as Seen by the Franciscans, 1898–1921: A Sourcebook. Edited by Howard M. Bahr. Lanham, MD, and Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2004. 656 pages. \$73.70 cloth.

Howard Bahr's title, although long, is a modest one. The subtitle is the best description for this book as it is essentially an edited mini-archive. The greater part of *The Navajo as Seen by the Franciscans* is made up of full texts and excerpts from published and unpublished articles and documents, most written by the Franciscan fathers. Those that have been previously published are from what are, today, obscure sources put out by branches of the Franciscan Order. Several were originally written in German and have been translated into English. Although the book provides many insights into the Franciscan