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"...And We Are Still Here": From Berdache to Two-Spirit People

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more concerned with traditional roles than contemporary lives. Many two-spirit writers also reflect on moving life stories and experiences. For example, Little Thunder tells of a time that "I heard a young two-spirit man cry because his sister would not allow him to hold his newborn nephew. She told him that she did not want her son to be gay" (p. 205). The life stories in *Two-Spirit People* make it clear that colonialism has irrevocably altered traditional Native North American gender systems, forcing two-spirit people to endure not just racism from the dominant culture, but prejudice from within their own cultures as well.

While some academic purists may question the wisdom of including essays that are more personal and less scholarly in a collection like *Two-Spirit People*, I believe their role is integral. The collaboration between two-spirit persons and researchers creates a kind of two-pronged attack on the limitations of "berdache" that is far more effective than either group would be standing alone. Moreover, the two-spirit presence keeps the anthropologists from becoming, for lack of a better term, too anthropological. In her perceptive summary of the volume, Evelyn Blackwood suggests that "Recognizing two-spirit as an identity rather than as an immutable gender may be the most fruitful direction to take" (p. 293). In fact, this may be the single most important contribution of this most important book. Although the dialogue between anthropologists and American Indian two-spirit people needs to continue, *Two-Spirit People* represents an essential step forward toward a more sensitive and complete understanding of an important topic in contemporary American Indian studies. It is both accessible and informative and is highly recommended as essential reading to anyone interested in American Indian gender systems.

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"We Are Still Here!" The Algonquian Peoples of Long Island Today. By John A. Strong. Interlaken, New York: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1996; 1998. 108 pages. \$14.00 paper.

In this upbeat little book John Strong, the author of a number of fine studies on Long Island Indian ethnohistory, has examined the efforts of Long Island's Shinnecocks, Unkechaugs, Montauketts, and Matinecocks to protect and nurture their cultural traditions and ensure their survival as autonomous groups with a powerfully articulated sense of ethnic identity. As the title of the work suggests, Strong is most interested in the efforts of Long Island's Indians to remain Indian in present-day New York state.

Strong has drawn heavily on the work of anthropologist Nancy Lurie, who described in 1971 the emergence of "articulatory movements" on the "Contemporary American Indian Scene" (*North American Indians in Historical Perspective*, New York, 1971, p. 418). According to Lurie, Indians have struggled to find a path between the extremes of economic marginality as Indian communities or the achievement of prosperity through individual assimilation. They have done so, she argued, through a "successful redefinition of

their socio-geographic environment from a condition of marginality to one of productivity in terms of more or less formalized, interactive relationships with the larger socio-economic system." Applying Lurie's model to the Long Island Indians, Strong has found "a resurgence of overt expressions of Native American identity, and, at the same time, successful development of ties with such outside agencies as federal, state, county, and town governments, churches, public schools, universities, and private contractors" (p. 13).

The book is celebratory in nature. Strong presents here a story of achievement, focusing much more on what these communities have accomplished than on the problems they face. Owing to the brevity of the work, Strong here has little room to discuss the obstacles the Montauketts and Mantinecocks will have to overcome as they seek federal recognition. He discusses cultural enrichment and awareness programs established in local schools without describing the problems these address; he describes the efforts of Native American entrepreneurs without discussing in any detail the problems of unemployment and economic underdevelopment that continue to plague Indian communities around the country. We learn much about the accomplishments of community leaders, while learning little about the community—demographics, economics, housing conditions—itself. As a result, one reads this work and finds many questions left unanswered.

In a scholarly monograph these omissions would be cardinal sins. Strong, however, has not set out to write such a work. His intent, it seems, is to offer a survey, and his aim is directed clearly towards a general audience. Measuring his work by these standards, Strong has succeeded quite nicely.

Using a combination of historical and anthropological source materials, as well as interviews with a significant number of Long Island Indian leaders, Strong examines the efforts of these communities to develop and strengthen their sense of cultural identity. This has been, for Long Island Indians, no easy task. Years of intermarriage with blacks and whites, along with a steady assault on their land base over several centuries, weakened ties to the Long Island Indians' traditional Algonquian culture. Nonetheless, Strong argues persuasively that "three fundamental cultural patterns—the communal ownership of land, the renewal of family and tribal ties at seasonal gatherings and funerals, and the identification as Native American . . . have remained intact in spite of pressures from the outside world to conform to the mainstream culture" (p. 16). Strong explains, during the course of the book, how Long Island Indians have accomplished this.

This is a useful book. The selection of illustrations is wonderful, and the anecdotal material included by Strong is well-chosen and very effective. Historians of twentieth-century Native America will find little that is new in this work, but I have found it a useful starting place to send students researching topics on contemporary Indian communities. Strong is to be commended for covering in brief compass a complicated, important, and heretofore neglected piece of Native American history.

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