

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

The Comanche Empire. By Pekka Kalevi Hamalainen.

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7qr398m4>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 33(1)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

2009

**DOI**

10.17953

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site of circuitous entry for those who fall out of favor as immigrants when the nation has economic or security concerns. Sadowski-Smith explains that the connection can become extremely complex as Latin Americans travel to Canada in order to enter the United States and Chinese writers move from Montreal to San Francisco. She finds an “inter-American” framework used by authors to convey the constant manipulation and re-creation of identity in a number of plays and stories about life between nations.

Not mentioned in her book are the numerous boundaries between sovereign nations, which could be examined as an interior frontier rendered less visible but never actually erased as sovereign nations were established in the early 1900s. Perhaps this is an example of how Sadowski-Smith’s work can be deployed by specialists in other areas to continue the conversation of identity, citizenship, and complex zones of contact.

Reading *Border Fictions* is much like being shown a new way to make a basket (which in Native culture is a form of high art and in American culture is an idiom used to describe a task for a simpleton). Sadowski-Smith’s basket is the former, a complex vessel, woven of several themes as indicated by the subtitle “Globalization, Empire, and Writing.” Strands of realism, travel, justice, economics, and imagery all are visible as they blend in the literature. “Border fictions,” she says “require new interdisciplinary models of academic inquiry that bring together approaches from the humanities and social sciences to address questions of globalization, U.S. empire, and nationalism of the hemisphere” (143). If her goal was to use a model of interdisciplinary inquiry to begin an important conversation, she succeeds. The only problem is that the book does leave the readers wanting more.

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**The Comanche Empire.** By Pekka Kalevi Hamalainen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 500 pages. \$35.00 cloth.

*Comanche Empire* is not simply a history of the Comanche people; it is a reanalysis of the history of the entire Southwest. Pekka Hamalainen makes a strong case for the existence of a vast indigenous empire that has been all but ignored by historians. This book will be of great interest to readers interested in Native American history and the American Southwest; it will also appeal to those interested in borderlands history, the Mexican-American war, and critical geopolitics. Hamalainen presents a provocative reordering of the conventional narratives of the Southwest, and his book is nothing less than the history of an “American Empire that, according to conventional histories, did not exist” (1).

Hamalainen’s work is a significant addition to the literature of the Southwest in that it reorients the state-centered notions of power that dominate histories of the region. This new telling of Comanche history demands a fresh assessment of conventional notions of “state.” According to

Hamalainen's central thesis, the Comanches exercised control over a large swath of land in the heart of the American continent, though "their aim was not to conquer and colonize, but to coexist, control, and exploit" (4). Power politics for the Comanches was a complex and flexible interplay of violence and diplomacy. The key word is *flexible*, and Hamalainen frequently reminds the reader that the shifting and nebulous nature of Comanche power does not fit neatly into the state-centric narratives that present the history of the Southwest as a steady progression of state power from the metropolitan centers of Spain, France, Mexico, and the United States.

Throughout the eight chapters Hamalainen describes the origin, rise, and eventual collapse of Comanche power. He begins with their emergence from the Rocky Mountains and their relations with other mountain tribes as well as with Spanish settlements. As their power expanded there was an unexpected role reversal as Comanches reworked the regional order to fit their own economic and political ends. Hamalainen describes an indigenous people at the center of power: "By the late 1770's, Spain faced an ominous situation in the far north: rather than bases for a great imperial extension beyond the Rio Grande, New Mexico and Texas had become peripheries in a new imperial order that pivoted around Comanchería" (101). Hamalainen deftly portrays the complex kaleidoscope of allies, enemies, and trading partners from which the Comanches shaped this new order. The transforming element was the horse; the acquisition of this animal drew the Comanches out onto the southern plains where they soon become masters of the bison hunt. This new power structure, based on a monopoly of the horse trade and located in the heart of the continent, became Comanchería—the Empire of the Comanches. Located at the intersection of several imperial states and numerous tribal ranges, they found that "by controlling the diffusion of animals from the livestock-rich Southwest to the north and east, they could literally control the technological, economic, and military evolution in the North American interior" (170).

The eventual decline of Mexican power and the rise of the American imperial presence marked the high-water mark of Comanche ascendancy. Hamalainen emphasizes that it was possible for these two empires to coexist as they operated on different levels and with differing conceptions of power. The reorientation of Comanche trade toward the US market set off a period of unrivaled growth; it is fascinating to read how this relationship unfolded and about its consequences for other tribes. For example, Hamalainen points out that this increase in commerce brought about a time of peace between the United States and Comanchería. In turn the resulting decrease in violence facilitated the removal of indigenous nations of the Southeast to the newly created Indian Territory, and Comanche trade boomed as it found new trading partners in the Territory. At the same time, this increase in peaceful trade to the north required launching attacks deeper and deeper into Mexico in order to obtain items for market. It is startling to read of the reach of Comanche power during this period as these raiding parties pushed almost to Mexico City and even seemed to threaten the nation-building projects of the Mexican government. When US troops invaded Mexico in 1846 "they entered

the shelterbelt of Comanche power” and found a nation already exhausted from previous invasions (234).

The Comanches’ rise to power is fueled by a combination of access to markets, a seemingly unending supply of bison, and a near monopoly on the horse trade of the southern Great Plains. Hamalainen describes in detail the cultural factors that helped them achieve this ascendancy. Their ability to adapt to a changing environment and to integrate new technologies is crucial; the Comanches were “a nation that was in a state of constant and at times uncontrolled change, a society that constantly re-invented itself” (239). Comanchería expansion created an insatiable desire for labor, a need that drove far-reaching changes in cultural concepts of slavery and marriage. For a time Comanches were able to feed this need through their willingness to integrate captives, allies, and slaves into their kinship systems effectively.

In the end it is a combination of American encroachment and ecological collapse that doomed the Comanche empire. Hamalainen shows the Comanches as victims of their own success as Comanchería produced a population that was no longer sustainable. The description of their downfall ties into one of the book’s key goals: to be a study of indigenous agency and the Comanche “role in the making, and unmaking, of colonial worlds” (360). The author fills a significant gap in the Comanches’ story as the previous literature on this nation typically treats them as roadblocks to the progress of civilization. This criticism of the popular perception of the region’s history is perhaps one of Hamalainen’s more intriguing insights; he presents a rare Comanche-centric vision of the Southwest. For example, the opening of Texas to American colonizers and its eventual loss to the United States is a result of the desperate need to colonize an area depopulated by sustained Comanche attacks.

What makes this perspective so different from many conventional histories is that it portrays an indigenous people as agents in charge of their own destinies: “Instead of perceiving Native policies toward colonial powers simply as strategies of survival, it assumes that Indians, too, could wage war, exchange goods, make treaties, and absorb peoples in order to expand, extort, manipulate, and dominate” (7). In the conclusion Hamalainen warns against idealizing the Comanches, an all-too-common portrayal that removes agency from indigenous peoples. The Comanche power politics the author describes in this work is unabashedly aggressive and exploitative. What makes his account particularly noteworthy is the central role he assigns to Comanchería in the development of the West. Not only did this imperial polity displace other empires, it also establishes a pattern for an entirely new type of culture, a pattern that inspired imitation by other indigenous peoples.

The author does an admirable job of explaining the cultural and environmental factors that make this success possible to the reader. The book has many maps (a trait too often lacking in otherwise good history books), exhaustive footnotes, and a detailed bibliography. *Comanche Empire* is part of the Lamar Series of Western History (one of the forthcoming titles in this series, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, will cover some of the same themes as it discusses Indian raids in the Mexican-American war). Because its readability

does make it appealing to a general audience, it would be an improvement to present even more cultural background on the Comanches, perhaps with an expanded introduction. Although Hamalainen does devote chapter six to the structure of Comanche society, it seems that there could be even more information on this aspect of the culture in order to allow the reader to understand these concepts from an internal perspective better. This discussion perhaps could be better placed toward the beginning of the work. One weakness of this work might lie in the very use of the word *empire*. Hamalainen argues for the existence of an empire ignored by historians while at the same time explaining how this Comanche empire had characteristics that defy many of the typical meanings of the term. It would be enlightening to have a discussion of the nuances that relevant terms have in the Comanche language. This is a minor absence, however, in a work that is well researched and eminently readable.

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**Encounters of the Spirit: Native Americans and European Colonial Religion.**

By Richard W. Pointer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007. 312 pages. \$39.99 cloth.

Starting with the now accepted premise that the culture shock brought about by colonialism affected the colonizers as well as the colonized, Pointer sets out to demonstrate how Native Americans influenced the Christianity of Catholic and Protestant settlers. This was true, he proposes, whether colonists sought to convert the Indians or to destroy them. In the former case, they had to develop strategies to appeal to potential converts; in the latter, they had to justify the carnage. In exploring these two conflicting approaches, Pointer examines six different case studies of the missionary-Indian encounter. His well-tailored prose, free of the excessive jargon that blemishes so many works in the social sciences and literary criticism today, is as lucid as his thesis. What is sometimes not so readily apprehensible, however, is how the examples he chooses support or even relate to his basic assertion.

This is especially true of the first case study, called "The Sounds of Worship," which concerns the use of Native singers, musicians, and instruments in Mexican church services from the 1550s to the 1580s. This short-lived collaboration, Pointer avers, led Catholic missionaries to use music as a form of evangelism, not only in the Americas but also throughout the world. He asserts, "the lives of natives and Europeans alike, including their religious lives, were simply different because of it" (17). On the part of the missionaries, however, this seems a tactical adjustment rather than an authentic strategic change. It appears in no way to have altered basic practices and the fundamental theology of the Catholic Church. What is true, and what may be said to have altered Catholic and Protestant beliefs, were the needed alterations in ways of thinking to account for the presence of peoples and lands