

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.- Dakota War. By Linda A. Clemmons.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/99b6k668>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 44(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Clow, Richmond L.

Publication Date

2020

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

contrast to his essay on the origins of tobacco through the lens of Indigenous myths, which provides invaluable insights into Maya perspectives of the plant—Erik Boot's study of hieroglyphic signs related to the Classic Maya word for tobacco (*mahy*) offers such a plethora of insight into the word's derivatives and associations that readers learn more about animal extremities, deer, and homes than tobacco.

Notwithstanding such minor (and perhaps overly historical) critiques, *Breath and Smoke* provides an original lens through which to understand ancient and modern Mayas—no small feat in such a prolific field. As is the wont of University of New Mexico Press, the images are plentiful and striking; the contributors adeptly integrate discussion of them into the essays. Aimed at specialists in Maya studies, particularly archeologists and anthropologists, this collection rewards a close read.

David Carey Jr.

Loyola University Maryland

Dakota in Exile: The Untold Stories of Captives in the Aftermath of the U.S.–Dakota War. By Linda A. Clemmons. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019. 260 pages. \$27.50 paper.

Among the conflicts of early North American colonization, several stand out because of their severity, violence, and the reprisals carried out on combatants and noncombatants at war's end. For the rage of the fighting, as well as colonial aggression and violence inflicted on tribal survivors, the Pequot War of 1637 and King Philip's War of 1675 come directly to mind. Unfortunately, that kind of ferocity resurfaced with the 1862 Dakota war in Minnesota. The Dakota attack at New Ulm, Minnesota on August 18, 1862 was initiated by the long-standing corruption and bad faith of the United States, loss of tribal land, and destruction of Dakota living standards. The fighting endured nearly two months, and postwar, national and local non-Indian leaders and community members turned their attention to demanding punishment and humiliation for the combatant and noncombatant Dakota survivors and captives. A time of great hardship ensued. This war's aftermath, seen through the eyes of the Hopkins family, is the theme of *Dakota in Exile*. Clemmons crafts her postwar captivity narrative on the Robert Hopkins family's story, as far as sources allowed, permitting the author to create a personal story of oppression, humiliation, and suffering that captives endured, as well as their resistance, resilience, relocation, and survival.

Historical, legal, and even literary works on the United States–Dakota War are extensive, since the conflict influenced national, state, and regional leaders to seek revenge. As federal soldiers and state volunteers brought the war toward an end at the battle of Wood Lake, tribal fighters and noncombatants understood the victors would squeeze and extract maximum punishments against them. Realizing the terrible fate awaiting them, some Dakota left Minnesota, seeking safety at Fort Garry, Manitoba, an act reminiscent of Sitting Bull's later flight to Canada. A terrible war displaced

them from their Minnesota homes, but they escaped a horrific American captivity. The self-imposed exile of these Dakota is not the subject of Clemmons' story, however.

At the war's end, sham Mankato war trials culminated in the convictions of hundreds. President Lincoln granted clemency to all but thirty-nine. After another prisoner won a reprieve, the largest mass hanging in the United States was carried out. After the executions, Congress abrogated Dakota treaties, removing them and the Ho Chunk people (included simply because they were considered "dirty savages") from Minnesota. Protestant missionaries were key players contributing to both sides of the captives' experience. Before the war, the Hopkins family joined Stephen Riggs's Hazelwood Republic Protestant community, aggregating old wounds within Dakota society and creating new ones. Robert Hopkins escaped the gallows, but then captivity began for him and his family. For better or worse, the family's Protestant connections made before the war followed them into exile.

Sarah Hopkins and her children, other women and children, as well as the Ho-Chunk were transported to Crow Creek, a reservation along the east bank of the Missouri River in present South Dakota. Without treaty supplies the exiles endured great misery, suffering from inadequate food, clothing, and shelter and extreme exposure. Instead of exile in Crow Creek, Robert and other men were imprisoned at Camp Kearney, in Davenport, Iowa. American captivity created hardships and currying missionaries' favor was a way to help their pressing needs at both Crow Creek and Camp Kearney by appearing "civilized." Robert, while seeking to convert other male captives, taught prisoners to read and write, skills that permitted the men at Camp Kearney to send letters to their families at Crow Creek. Robert was released in 1865 and reunited with his family at Crow Creek.

Besides telling the Crow Creek and Camp Kearney stories, Clemmons provides an excellent analysis of the captives' postwar colonial experience and Dakota resiliency. During the missionaries' prewar intervention, despite looking down on Dakota cultural values, the missionaries hoped that Dakota willingness to adopt English language could lead to religious conversion and brought English literacy that also pushed the false narrative of Dakota language being inferior. During the hardships of captivity, English literacy became a powerful tool of tribal resiliency, permitting captives to communicate with loved ones between Crow Creek and Camp Kearney. Often missionaries transported the correspondence. After entering Camp Kearney, Dakota prisoners also found that showing outward signs of Christian conversion, like English literacy, might help them to gain missionary support for assistance while imprisoned, or hopefully release. Even more difficult than going through conversion or becoming literate in English was the decision to serve as an army scout on the punitive expeditions against the Dakota fleeing Minnesota after the war. Sarah Hopkins was related to the Renville family and several relatives became scouts for General Henry Sibley. Volunteering to scout meant meager pay, but provided some support for one's exiled family. On the other hand, many kin called the scouts traitors and the sting of scouting continues today.

Camp Kearney's closure and the end of the punitive expeditions brought relocation for the captives. Exiled from Minnesota, new homes were built at Lake Traverse

and Sisseton in present northeast South Dakota. More were relocated to Devils Lake in current North Dakota and a small reserve was located at Santee, Nebraska on the Missouri River for Crow Creek refugees. Later, some left Santee and homesteaded near Flandreau, South Dakota. This Dakota dispersal fulfilled Minnesota's revenge. The Hopkins family and the larger Dakota captives are the foundation of Clemmons's excellent telling of this tragedy. The author delivers comprehensive detail that supports the narrative's analysis and presents a compelling, first-rate critical examination of the US nation's ruthless search for revenge against the Dakota of Minnesota—a story in which once more, victims become the recipients of unwarranted anger and blame.

Richmond L. Clow
University of Montana

The Dakota Sioux Experience at Flandreau and Pipestone Indian Schools. By Cynthia Leanne Landrum. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 243 pages. \$55.00 cloth and electronic.

Historians, anthropologists, and educators have published numerous works addressing the systems, institutions, and experiences of American Indian boarding schools in the American West. While prior to the 1970s some earlier works have presented schools promoting assimilation as positive, since that time most research highlights the federal Indian education system's problematic philosophies and experiences. This two-part, six-chapter volume aligns with contemporary studies that focus on individual schools, Native agency, and people who "turned the power" of schools away from assimilation and toward tribal agendas. Focusing on the histories of two federal Indian schools in the Upper Midwest, in roughly chronological order Landrum examines Flandreau Indian School and Pipestone Indian School, institutions founded one year apart in the 1890s and separated by only fifteen miles and the Minnesota/South Dakota border.

In "History," the first part, Landrum presents the conditions leading to the founding of the schools and developments at each institution into the early decades of the twentieth century. She then devotes a chapter each to the impact of national policies during the Indian New Deal, termination, and self-determination eras on the two schools. Part 2, "Student Reflections," offers varied student experiences at Flandreau and Pipestone schools. The author's stated purpose is to "illuminate the relationship of the Dakota Sioux to the schools, the larger region (which includes Pipestone Quarry), and their long-term effort to maintain their role as caretakers of the 'sacred citadel' of their people" (xiii). In addition, the work seeks to examine "ongoing evolutionary relationships" from the first alliances "between the Algonquin confederations and the European powers" to later connections into Dakota Territory (xiv). That is a tall order and the work is ultimately more successful in connecting the schools to Dakota people than back to distant places and colonial times.

Landrum grounds her research in a variety of sources. Like many boarding school histories, she addresses the ideology of assimilation, insufficient funding, infrastructure