2013

Review of *The Woman Who Loved Mankind: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Crow Elder* By Lillian Bullshows Hogan, as told to Barbara Loeb and Mardell Hogan Plainfeather

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Joining the discussion with other anthropologists and historians who have been wrestling with the definition of "tribal," Rzeczkowski challenges the position some have maintained that the concept of "tribal" is of totally Euro-American origin, designed to facilitate colonial control over Indigenous populations. Rzeczkowski recognizes this position as a reaction to the legacy of nineteenth-century notions of "evolutionary anthropology," which established a false hierarchical dichotomy between "tribal"—as something static, rigid, primitive, and constrained by tradition—and "modern"—as fluid, diverse, complex, and open. However, he points out that abandoning the concept of "tribe" implies that "Indian" identity requires the surrender of tribal identities.

Anchored in a wealth of historical record from the Crow and other Northern Plains reservation communities (Blackfeet and Lakota), Rzeczkowski eloquently demonstrates a dynamic interplay of continuous Indigenous initiative and creativity unfolding within federally imposed restrictions. Providing examples from both individual lives and social groupings, he establishes that the Crow and other Indigenous communities were anything but passive. "Tribe" becomes a dynamic term, continually redesigned by the Crow people to meet their needs and form their changing identity over time.

While reservations—designed to be "hermetically sealed, isolated islands"—sought to constrain, they provided the Crow and other communities, ironically, a setting in which to continue conducting various Indigenous means of social, cultural, and political exchanges and alliances, helping to facilitate inclusive and dynamic community identities. Through the initiatives of the Crow people, reservations fostered a sense of social solidarity, as well as a new sense of "Indianness," intertribalism, and a pan-Indian identity. The Crows of the late nineteenth century were a multiethnic, inclusive community. Despite the efforts of reservation administrators, many of the forms of exchange that flourished prior to reservations continued unabated during the reservation period.

But by the early twentieth century, as various reservation resources dwindled, access to land contracted, and jobs became scarce, the motivations of the Crow and other communities to spawn inclusive ties with other tribes diminished, to be replaced by much more exclusive, fixed, and impermeable tribal identities. Reliance on the Euro-American-derived "blood quantum," this racially based and externally imposed criterion was incorporated by the Crow and other communities, becoming the basis for their new, narrowly defined, divided tribal identities. This has resulted in the Crow and other tribes "reinventing" their sense of past identities, viewing the past and "tradition" through the lens of current identities.

Rzeczkowski has presented an accessible, well-documented, and insightful critique of the meanings of "tribal" and "identity," certain to contribute to the ongoing discussions of these constructs by historians and anthropologists, and by the Crow people themselves.

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The Woman Who Loved Mankind is a collection of the life stories of Lillian Bullshows Hogan, a Crow elder who lived from 1905 (perhaps as early as 1902) to 2003. After individual introductions by Barbara Loeb and Mardell Hogan Plainfeather, Hogan’s daughter, Hogan’s stories begin with “When I Was Born” and end with “I Feel Proud.” In between, she recounts how she was named, her memories as a young child, the stories of her elders, her experiences at boarding school, and the destructive effects of alcohol within her family. We hear about her husbands and children, while simultaneously learning about Crow traditions...
and the ways in which Hogan, throughout her life, wove together the ways of her elders and the ways of the non-Indian culture that surrounded her. She speaks of her grandchildren, the honors she has received (Lady Bird Johnson, for example, visited her home in 1964), and through these honors the names she was able to make and give to her grandchildren. As readers experience early reservation life, they learn about poverty, reservation politics, gender roles, women’s work, Crow families, Crow traditions, and relationships between Crows and non-Indians.

This is the ninth biography or autobiography written by or about a Crow person, including several about people of Hogan’s generation. Yet this contribution is unique. First, its style makes it an excellent contribution to the history of the Great Plains. Loeb’s desire to protect “Lillian’s right to speak for herself” led her to write down Hogan’s stories in a way that preserves Crow storytelling conventions. Thus, for every pause in Hogan’s speech, Loeb creates a line break, making the text read as though one were sitting at the foot of a Crow elder as she “speaks directly to you from the page.” Loeb’s and Plainfeather’s scholarship is documented in the endnotes, which connect the stories to previous scholarship concerning Crow history, as well as providing additional valuable information about twentieth-century Crow reservation life. The text as a whole records the voice of a Crow elder and positions this voice in the historical and cultural context in which Hogan’s life took place. Any concern that readers might find Hogan’s storytelling style foreign at first is minor in view of what the text as a whole achieves.

The book’s greatest contribution is its masterful discussion of Crow kinship and the role of traditional sacred ceremonies during the early reservation period. What is clearly shown is the role of adoption within Crow kinship as children are often ceremonially adopted by others—creating a larger support network. At times these adoptions are connected to traditional ceremonies. Hogan’s stories of the responsibilities one has to one’s clan uncles and aunts brings to life the complex Crow clan system. Several chapters discuss the Sacred Pipe and Tobacco Societies, showing how Hogan integrated these traditions into her devout Christian life. In addition, the story and discussion of the social position of the Last Crow Berdache is rarely seen in other texts.

Despite its length, it is essential reading for new and seasoned students and scholars of American Indian cultures.

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