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Review of *Anthropology on the Great Plains* Edited by W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty

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BOOK REVIEWS

Anthropology on the Great Plains. Edited by W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980. Maps, tables, index. vii + 306 pp. \$25.00.

This useful collection of review essays issues from the 34th Plains Conference, entitled "Anthropology on the Great Plains: The State of the Art," which took place in Minneapolis in 1976. The contributors were asked to summarize the past and present achievements and the future challenges of Plains anthropological research in the four traditional subfields of the discipline (physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archeology, and linguistics) and in a number of specialized topics, including Indian art, music and dance, and education. In their lively introduction, the editors, Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty, express their hopes that this inventory will serve to counteract the specialization and fragmentation that characterizes modern anthropology. It is fair to say that they have achieved this integration of knowledge for the culture area of the Great Plains.

Altogether there are twenty-one essays in the book, most of them about ten to fifteen pages in length. All the essays, except the last, which is a compilation of Plains Indian populations and locations, are accompanied by extensive bibliographies. Obviously, consistency and continuity are difficult to achieve when so many authors are involved. Some essays stand as creative works in their own right; others are only prefaces to their bibliographies. Among the best are Wood's essay on prehistoric and protohistoric Indian trade, which ties the Plains trade system into a wider continental network, and the article by Mildred Wedel and Raymond DeMallie on the ethnohistorical approach to Plains anthropology, an approach

first promoted as a formal methodology by William Duncan Strong in 1935. Despite its jargon, Alan Klein's "Plains Economic Analysis: The Marxist Complement" offers new perspectives. Using "conflict" rather than "consensus" thinking, Klein exposes the stresses that were weakening the social structures of Great Plains Indians in the nineteenth century. Contrary to the "consensus" view, Klein argues that the status of Indian women declined during the course of the nineteenth century, largely as a result of the acquisition of the horse. Their participation in crucial procurement activities decreased while their work as processors increased, and along with this changing economic role came diminished legal, political, and social status.

The subject of Plains Indian women is also taken up by Katherine Weist in a thought-provoking essay. Weist attributes the paucity of studies on Indian women to the practice whereby "male ethnographers interviewed male informants, using male language about a male-dominated world" and also to "the emphasis placed on the dramatic male roles in the Plains associated with hunting, warfare and religion" (p. 256). To my mind, however, the two most fascinating essays—on the Native American Church and the Ghost Dance—were written by Omer C. Stewart, whose own career spans four decades of Plains anthropology.

By its very nature this is not a book to be read from cover to cover, but it is a valuable source book that should be used frequently, not only by anthropologists, but also by historians, geographers, and others interested in the rich tradition of anthropological research on the Great Plains.

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