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Review of *Shapers of the Great Debate on Native Americans- Land, Spirit, and Power: A Biographical Dictionary* By Bruce E. Johansen

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BOOK REVIEWS

Shapers of the Great Debate on Native Americans—Land, Spirit, and Power: A Biographical Dictionary. By Bruce E. Johansen. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 2000. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xxi + 274 pp. \$65.00.

This useful compilation of biographical sketches spans about 375 years of conflict. The basic issue is Native land rights versus unremitting colonial expansion. The eight chapters are arranged as separate chronological periods, beginning with seventeenth-century New England, and generally track the westward movement of the frontier. Each chapter presents a biographical sketch of its period's key players. The actors are juxtaposed to present both Native and non-Native views of Native land rights and sovereignty. Sequoyah and John Ross appear in a chapter with Andrew Jackson and John Marshall; Custer is set against Sitting Bull and Red Cloud. Lakota spokesmen Black Elk and Luther Standing Bear and the Ponca Standing Bear are included as well.

Two sub-debates develop: whether the US Constitution was based partly on an Iroquois model; and whether the concept of "Mother Earth" was originally Native American or concocted by whites. "Factual" resolution of either of these is probably less significant than what they implicitly ask: Are Natives really owed anything? For example, to deny that "Mother Earth" was Native might suggest that Natives "really" did not care all that much about the land itself—which raises the persis-

tent colonialist question: "Why all this fuss about Indian land loss?" And what's to be gained by trying to deny Iroquois impact on our national charter?

The collection's primary strengths are the wide variety of actors and events it describes and its extensive bibliography. Lacking Native accounts of the earlier Native protagonists, their attributes take on a generally flattering sameness as described by non-Native observers: strong, wise, imposing presence, and so on. Here biography becomes mostly a series of events, usually battles and treaty negotiations, and attributed statements. There's more individual detail about recent players such as Vine Deloria Jr. and Oren Lyons (including Lyons's skill at lacrosse). A final appendix offers one-paragraph biographical sketches of other personalities involved in the ongoing confrontation. (One could quibble over why John Collier is not included, while Friedrich Engels is.)

This is an important reference work, handy for scholars looking for a quick view of individuals and events outside their areas of expertise, valuable for teachers of Native history and culture, and indispensable for libraries and other resource centers. General readers will also find it informative, if a bit pricey for home libraries.

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