

INDIANS, ANIMALS AND THE FUR TRADE: A CRITIQUE OF *KEEPERS OF THE GAME*. Edited by SHEPARD KRECH III. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1981. 207 p. + Bib. US\$12.00. Hardbound.

There can be no single, agreed-upon perspective on the past; in any perspective there may be true accounts.

Conkin and Stromberg (1971).

A recent review article devoted to the future of ethnohistory concluded that the study of ideology is a much-neglected area of inquiry in social science (Schwerin, 1976:335). An important exception to the dearth of such studies is a book by historian Calvin Martin, entitled *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade*. The subject of this review, a collection of papers presented at the 1979 annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, is a critical assessment of Martin's book.

Krech's anthology cannot be reviewed without first providing a summary of *Keepers of the Game*. Martin is concerned with the eastern subarctic Micmac and Ojibwa and argues that European disease, Christianity, and the fur trade were "responsible for the corruption of the Indian-land relationship in which the native had merged himself sympathetically with his environment" (1978:65). With the undermining of the traditional belief system, time-honoured sanctions against wildlife overkill were nullified and eastern Canadian hunters became badly exploitative. Martin further observes that this destruction of wildlife may not have stemmed originally from a desire to obtain furs for trade. He writes that, on the eve of European contact, Indian and beast were at war as a result of the stupefying onslaught of epidemic disease brought to the New World by Europeans. Martin reasons that the Indians, completely powerless to explain or cure these new diseases, blamed wildlife for their sicknesses and as a result went on a war of revenge against various animals which soon became transformed into the historic fur trade. Certain animals were heavily exploited and others were virtually exterminated. Essential to this interpretation is Martin's observation that the Micmac were "seemingly accustomed" to blaming offended wildlife for illnesses (1978:146).

Martin's efforts to explain the profound changes inherent in this episode of culture contact are guided by a perspective which makes his book particularly worthwhile. In recognizing the supernatural world view of the Indian as an integral dimension of the fur trade, Martin rejects Western economic interpretations of the trade as essentially a supply-and-demand phenomenon. In so doing, he calls into question the scholarly fraternity's own cultural baggage. Martin admits that his interpretation is novel and may be viewed by many readers as a fantasy, suffused as it is with Native cosmology and spiritual beliefs. His concern with understanding fur trade history from an Indian point of view leaves him open to accusations of specious and presumptive reasoning. Martin is not a Native American and he did not witness the events he describes. But such criticisms, valid or not, cannot obscure the importance of Martin's achievement in elucidating the complexity of human behaviours, particularly in the context of a subject normally laden with ethnocentric assumptions.

The first paper in Krech's collection is by Martin, and is essentially a summary of his book. This sets the stage for the ensuing articles, beginning with an examination of Huron ethnohistory by Bruce Trigger. In summary, Trigger maintains that Martin's view is too speculative and that his own data support a materialist interpretation, rather than an idealist one: That is, the Indians valued European goods because those goods made life easier for them. Furthermore, the Huron were prepared to hunt beaver to extinction to obtain these goods. Trigger writes that there is no direct evidence that the Huron associated disease with animal spirits, and that during major epidemics, chronicled in *Jesuit Relations*, Huron curing rituals were dynamic and innovative. Trigger rejects what he calls Martin's "obscure and poorly documented religious motivations" to explain Indian participation in the fur trade.

While Charles Bishop finds some of Martin's reasoning to be preposterous, he recognizes *Keepers of the Game* as an important book because of the theoretical issues it contains. Bishop suggests that, contrary to Martin's logic, Indians afflicted with epidemic disease might have been particularly deferential toward game spirits, since warring against them might be understood to create even more sickness. Writing of the Northern Algonkian region in Chapter Three, Bishop rejects the notion that animals were killed in revenge for the diseases they spread, thereby rejecting Martin's idealist argument for Indian involvement in the trade. Bishop, however, further develops the materialist explanation by noting that to remain secure, to be generous to one's followers, to avoid unnecessary labour, and to enhance prestige were also important considerations underlying Indian participation in the trade.

In Chapter Four, an essay which moves tantalizingly close to some fundamental issues in Martin's work, Dean Snow discusses Martin's main thesis

and the nature of explanation. He concludes that Martin is guilty of a reductive fallacy in providing a simplistic cause-effect explanation for a complex situation. Snow believes that Martin has substituted hypotheses for documentation.

Of most interest in this chapter is Snow's treatment of ideology. Although he believes that ideology is discernible in the study of cultural systems, the apparent lack of importance he assigns to it is intriguing. Snow writes: "...it seems clear to me that in most cultural systems most of the time, ideology has been largely a product of other factors and not itself a factor that significantly influenced other factors either positively or negatively" (1981:65). Nevertheless, Snow does not deny that Martin may have found some specific cases where ideological change led to overhunting, though he does object to applying this hypothesis to all of northern North America after 1600 A.D. Martin, however, explicitly states that *Keepers of the Game* is an effort to understand events dealing mainly with Algonkian-speaking tribes in the eastern Subarctic and a portion of the northeast, particularly the Micmac (1978:3-4). Is there a straw man lurking in Snow's attempt to discredit the applicability of a hypothesis when the limitations have already been set forth by its proponent? I submit that, far from creating a reductive fallacy, Martin has contributed significantly to the enrichment and complexity of fur trade interpretation by promulgating the relevance of ideological concerns. Snow is to be credited for hoping that Martin will continue his exploration, although Snow clearly states that this particular hypothesis cannot support the burden of proof that he believes it must.

Shepard Krech, a Northern Athapaskanist and the editor of this volume, draws upon his own work in the western Canadian Subarctic in Chapter Five. Krech's stated purpose is to evaluate the extension of Martin's hypothesis to Northern Athapaskans. On the basis of ethnohistorical data, Krech writes that nineteenth-century Kutchin, as well as other Northern Athapaskans, blamed sorcerers, rather than offended animal spirits, for sickness, disease, and death. He views the Kutchin as opportunists in the trade, actively involved because they desired beads, dentalia, shells, guns, and other trade items. Unlike other Northern Athapaskan groups, the Kutchin distinguished among themselves on the basis of wealth. Krech's analysis parallels the materialist interpretations of Trigger and Bishop discussed earlier. In the end, Krech also completely disagrees with Martin and accuses him of throwing care to the wind in his reconstruction of past ideology and his approach to the etiology of disease among the Koyukon.

In one of the most thorough and reasoned papers in the collection, Lydia Black finds that Martin's thesis of a contact-induced redefined relationship between Indian and animals, resulting in the indiscriminate slaughter of the latter, is inapplicable to the Aleut. Among these people, there is no evidence that animals were conceptualized as disease-causing agents. Black concludes that there is "absolutely no evidence that the taking of animals increased because of a conceptual redefinition of the hunter-prey relationship". The Aleut ideal held that a man proved himself as a hunter by taking as many animals as he could. Neither is there any indication on the basis of available evidence that conversion to Christianity affected Aleut hunting practices or the number of animals they killed. Rather, the Aleuts feared the decrease of valuable sea animals as a result of unregulated hunting by outsiders, namely "the whites".

Of particular interest, in light of Snow's earlier dismissal of ideological considerations as prime movers, are Black's thoughts on the subject. She agrees with Martin's contention that there was a transformation in Indian thinking as a result of the social dislocation and psychological stress produced by European contact. And Black does not appear to discount the importance of ideology in structuring human behaviour, although she does object to the particular cause-effect relationship defined by Martin. Her supporting argument is cogent, and draws on a number of anthropological and philosophical sources.

Charles Hudson argues in Chapter Seven that Martin's version of the Indian belief system cannot explain why the Southeastern Indians killed such large numbers of deer for their skins. Hudson is unique among the contributors in defining conditions and propositions in order to evaluate Martin's theory against the Southeastern data. Two conditions and three propositions later, Hudson concludes as a result of his well-written analysis that economic and political imperatives were paramount. In short, seventeenth-century Indians living in the vicinity of English plantations had the choice of either being killed or enslaved, or trading in deerskins in order to obtain firearms to defend themselves. This is perhaps the most pronounced materialist argument in the volume; in Hudson's words, the Indians "did what they had to do in order to survive" (emphasis mine).

Hudson continues his analysis with a discussion of ideal versus real behaviour in preliterate societies. Citing the very real discrepancy between what people say they ought to do and what they actually do, he concludes that historians are more likely than social anthropologists to be misled by ideal culture patterns which appear in the documentary evidence. Readers are also urged to consider Hudson's observations on the limits of the "Indian point of

view". Planned or unplanned, the first seven chapters are in a sense a prelude to the last two, wherein the reader is offered a glimpse of the heart of the matter.

William Sturtevant, one of anthropology's senior scholars, identifies several issues of broader interest in Chapter Eight. He agrees with Martin at the outset that much of the previous work on the topic has suffered from the ethnocentric assumption "that Indian motives were those of Western economic man". Yet, world view and the relation of man to nature are perhaps the most difficult aspects of ethnohistorical reconstruction, according to Sturtevant. He cautions against trusting older contemporary sources for such insight, not to mention sources which are several hundred years old. As an example of the best and most sympathetic work of this sort, Sturtevant discusses Irving A. Hallowell's work among the Ojibwa as the basis for rejecting Martin's thesis. Among the Ojibwa, events are apparently the consequence of the behaviour of persons. Hallowell's observation that the Ojibwa idea of causation was personalistic is the theme of a valuable and complex discussion which results in Sturtevant's observation that among the Ojibwa "it would make no sense whatsoever to take revenge on game animals for human illness". Thinking beyond data and analysis, Sturtevant is concerned about the nature of historical and anthropological explanation, our own professional world view, and our notions of causation, all issues which Martin's book brings to the fore. Sturtevant's candour in admitting that we may not adequately understand our own scholarly world view is a notable contrast to the lack of such intellectual anxiety among the other contributors.

Krech allows Martin to have the final say in the last chapter of this collection, a fair-minded consideration in light of the preceding avalanche of disapprobation. Martin uses this opportunity to its fullest and, in particular, approaches the concerns of one of the contributors in a manner that imparts lasting value to this collection. With a tone of modest confidence, Martin writes that his book is one of "controlled imagination, well within the usual scholarly bounds", and apparently regrets that the authors of this volume are not concerned with his book on that plane. The one exception is Sturtevant, whose provocative discussion of Hallowell is given special consideration by Martin in his concluding remarks. The gist of Martin's remarks is that Hallowell recognizes an association between animals and human disease and simultaneously denies it. Martin also demonstrates that Hallowell's observations on subarctic Indian disease ideology are at times enigmatic, perhaps muddled, and can be interpreted in different ways. For this and other reasons having to do with the cosmology of Canadian subarctic hunters and gatherers, Martin remains unreconciled to his critics.

This collection of essays can be considered from at least two points of view. Clearly, it is an unreceptive treatment of what is seen to be a speculative, ideational interpretation of certain historical events by an historian. It is regrettable in light of this that more of the authors did not deal directly with Martin's evidence on the Micmac and the Ojibwa. Several of them range far afield, with the result that much of Martin's discussion was not subjected to in-depth analysis. It would also have been valuable to include a scholar or scholars of Native American origin among the contributors, given the ideational issues inherent in the topic. A non-Western perspective provides a necessary balance to the limitations of our own scholarly world view, and remains uncommon in the anthropological literature of North America. Of less significance is the absence of a map depicting the distribution of Indian groups discussed in the text. All in all, Krech is to be commended for recognizing the importance of Martin's bold perspective and for assembling this collection of erudite papers as an acknowledgement. In the end, Martin's theory cannot be rejected, in the sense that "the available evidence rarely necessitates our judgments but is at least consistent with them" (Conkin and Stromberg, 1971:219). In the absence of one demonstrably correct explanation there may be numerous interpretations, and this is the substance of scholarship. Krech's book is an embodiment of this essential, ceaseless process.

Perhaps more importantly, this collection raises fundamental issues, both implicitly and explicitly, which transcend scholarly specializations and disciplinary boundaries. The very nature of ethnohistorical inquiry is one of these issues, as Martin and his critics, most notably Sturtevant, demonstrate the difficulties in advancing one particular explanation as the correct one. With respect to Hallowell's data, at least, the "truth" may depend on who is interpreting it. This leads into questions of what constitutes evidence, as well as matters of causation and objectivity. Those who use the historical record regularly are undoubtedly aware of these and related issues in the pursuit of their own particular interests. For those of us who make brief forays into the written past as anthropologists and archaeologists, such an awareness is equally as essential if a sensitive treatment of the subject is sought.

I recommend this book to all with an interest or investment in historical and ethnohistorical research. It would be particularly valuable to those who are just starting out, as it is a clear testimony to the fact that complex questions require complex, creative, and disciplined answers. In any event, these answers

never come easily. I would also recommend the book to anyone with scholarly interests in the social sciences, as the book is a concise illustration of the healthy tension which exists between exceptionally creative generalists and learned specialists. Each has a perspective and both are essential. Finally, the book will appeal to those with an interest in the early history of the New World, who undoubtedly will delight in the discovery of yet another facet of fur trade history. This period seems to be a bottomless pit of historical richness.

That Martin remains unreconstructed despite the barrage of criticism is less important than the fact that his ideas have been examined in a serious and forthright manner. Although Krech's book offers no final solution to the debate surrounding Martin's novel thesis, it has deepened the thinking which may yet lead to a resolution.

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ETNICHESKAYA ISTORIYA NARODOV SEVERA (ETHNOHISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH). Edited by I.S. GURVICH. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1982. 268 p. Price 2 rubles 80 kopecks (North American price unknown). Printed in Russian.

The subject matter of this monograph constitutes a continuation of the editor's recently published *Ethnogenesis of the People of the North* (Gurvich, 1980). The focus is on ethnic development of the population of the high north in what is now the U.S.S.R. from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. The monograph was edited by ethnographer I.S. Gurvich, who is presently head of the Department of Northern and Siberian Peoples at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. An Introduction and a Conclusion are separated by 11 chapters written by ethnographers and historians of the Soviet North: Z.P. Sokolova — Ob' Ugrians (Khants and Mansi); V.I. Vasil'ev — Nenets and Enets; U.B. Simchenko — Nganasans; E.A. Alekseenko — Kets; V.V. Lebedev and Z.P. Sokolova — Sel'kups; V.A. Tugolukov — Evenks and Evens; I.S. Gurvich — Yukagirs, and northeastern Paleoasiatics and Eskimos; and A.V. Smolyak — people of the Low Amur River and Sakhalin Island.

This is a consistent and well-organized work in which all the chapters follow the structure of a unified idea. The authors, irrespective of their research areas, have addressed a number of identical problems. In investigating the ethnohistory of the people of the Soviet North, they have examined: (1) demographic fluctuations of native groups; (2) linguistic and ethnocultural processes; (3) changes in the ethnic structure of the Siberian population; and (4) interrelationships between neighboring populations. The authors used primarily source materials from regional and local archives, including taxpayers' records (*yasak*), as well as church records, which allowed them to make conclusions about marriage norms, interrelationships with the Russians, and the socioeconomic level of the northern population.

The works of past Russian and Soviet historians and ethnographers such as Bogoraz, Dolgikh, and Jochelson are extensively utilized, as are published historical sources such as: *Dopolneniya k aktam istoricheskim* (Addition to the historical evidence) (SPb, 1848-1867); *Kolonial'naya politika Moskovskogo gosudarstva v Yakutii XVII stoletiya* (Colonial politics of the Moscow State in Yakutiya in the 17th century) (Moscow, 1936); and *Kolonial'naya politika tsarizma na Kamchatke i Chukotke* (Colonial politics of the Tsarist government in Kamchatka and Chukchi Peninsula) (Leningrad, 1935).

This systematic work demonstrates an advantage of centrally organized scientific research. Such organization allows successful coordination of long-term projects involving various specialists and research institutions, by dealing from a central point with the complicated organizational, financial, and in-