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Where the Dove Calls: The Political Ecology of a Peasant Corporate Community in Northwestern Mexico by Thomas E. Sheridan

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its nutritional value, its mythology, the old and modern harvesting methods. He then proceeds to the role of wild rice in historic Great Lakes Indian-white relations, present-day social conflicts, and the law.

At times Vennum's control of his data seems mechanical. The date-jumping is confusing to nonspecialists, and the reader needs maps in the final chapters. But these are minor problems in a very solid book. The subject may seem narrow, but it raises a host of large issues:

1) Staple foods, thoroughly studied, reveal much about tribal history and culture change. The story of wild rice traces the Ojibway shift from barter and sharing to a cash economy, from cooperation to competition; it reveals a total reversal of the roles of men and women; it includes the decline of ceremonies, and it illustrates the Indian experiences of remorse, loss, and liquor. In short, Vennum turns rice into a barometer for Ojibway culture.

2) Indian traditional technology was complex and ingenious.

3) Our designation of major and minor natural resources is relative. We customarily think of pine, whitefish, copper, and iron as the prime Great Lakes resources, yet the loss of rice, sugarbush, and birchbark may have harmed native peoples more, just as loss of piñon nuts and saguaro in the Southwest and shellfish on the North Coast crippled native lifeways. Much of the damage came from the shortsighted construction of dikes and dams, and from dredging, clearing land, pollution, motorboats, tourists and sportsmen.

4) Staple food habits change slowly and painfully. An average American trying to eliminate refined sugar, or reduce fat intake by 60 percent, can begin to imagine what Chippewas faced when they lost their rice and wildlife.

5) Past cycles of conquest, exploitation, and displacement of Indians continue today. A recent threat to Ojibway lifeways, the artificial paddy and "wild" rice industry, began in 1968. In the past twenty years this industry has followed historic patterns, developing attitudes toward land similar to those held by the Puritans, Andrew Jackson, and Oklahoma oil barons.

6) Indian policy in Canada is no better than in the U. S., possibly worse.

Thomas Vennum's excellent, closely documented book includes many rare photographs which give vision to our thinking about the earth and social justice. *Wild Rice and the Ojibway People* is a fascinating part of the larger story of Europe in North America, ideally read with Alfred Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism* and William Cronon's *Changes in the Land*.

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ROBERT H. KELLER, JR.

Where the Dove Calls: The Political Ecology of a Peasant Corporate Community in Northwestern Mexico. By THOMAS E. SHERIDAN. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988. xxiv + 237 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, tables, glossary, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Thomas Sheridan's latest book is the first extended ethnography of a non-Indian peasant community in northern Mexico, and for that reason alone is very

important. However, through insightful analyses of carefully compiled data, it also contributes significantly to the radical revision currently underway of the traditional image of peasants as isolated, powerless, communalistic, and resistant to innovation.

Sheridan's goal is "to describe how people battled aridity and one another in order to survive in an agrarian society characterized by economic inequality and political conflict" (p. xvi). He adopts the perspective of "political ecology," an approach pioneered by Mexican and American anthropologists like Warman, Palerm, Netting, and Wolf, in which social institutions and practices are regarded not as determined primarily by either ecological or political factors but rather as conditioned by the interaction of these and related cultural, historical, and economic forces.

The book focuses on three corporate peasant organizations in the *Municipio* of Cucurpe, Sonora, located about one hundred kilometers south of the Arizona border. Two of these organizations, called *comunidades*, claim descent from communal organizations of the Spanish colonial period while the third, an *ejido*, was established in 1976. In the first section of his book, Sheridan traces the history of Cucurpe from its founding as a Jesuit mission in the seventeenth century to the 1980s and provides a brief overview of the demography and economy of present-day Cucurpe. In the second section, he discusses in detail the principal components of the Cucurpe economy: irrigated farming, livestock raising, and other, nonagrarian activities like mining and moonshining. In the final section he examines the economic and political inequalities found both among the members of the corporate peasant organizations and between them and private ranchers—including an absentee elite—and explores how these inequalities figure in conflicts over control of grazing land and irrigation water. Here Sheridan makes a major contribution by documenting local attitudes that simultaneously favor collective control of these scarce resources but persistently and sometimes violently oppose the replacement of private ownership of arable land by communal tenure. As he indicates, these data support Netting's hypothesis that corporate tenure in peasant societies more often than not represents "a pragmatic response to resources individual households cannot control on their own" (p. 189) rather than an expression of peasant communal solidarity.

Establishing and promoting communal peasant organizations has been a centerpiece of post-Revolutionary Mexico's program of agrarian reform. Writing in a clear, engaging style, Sheridan offers an excellent account of how these organizations actually function on the local level. In the process, he reveals the multiplicity of factors that interact to produce the circumstances within which these peasants compete and cooperate with one another in their struggle to sustain a decent life.

Smithsonian Institution

WILLIAM L. MERRILL

Frontier's End: The Life & Literature of Harvey Fergusson. By ROBERT F. GISH. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988. xv + 363 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$35.00.)

This first full-length literary biography of Harvey Fergusson is welcome indeed. While there have been perceptive essays by John Milton, William T. Pilkington, Lawrence Clark Powell, and James K. Folsom, one of the best writers about