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## Review of The Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Insight and Industrial Empire in the Semiarid World

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makes it particularly original and provocative. Included are the lands of the indigenous people of the North American Plains, the Australian Aborigines, the Kazakhs of what was once the USSR, the Maasai of Kenya, several groups in South Africa, Alaskan, and Lapp (Saami) people. Contributors are from anthropology, economics, English, law, history, religion, Native American studies, and environmental studies and they are John W. Bennett, Anatoly Khazanov, Russel L. Barsh, Gary C. Anders, Robson Silitshena, Peter Iverson, C. Patrick Morris, Annette Hamilton, Solomon Bekure, Ishmael Ole Pasha, J. Baird Callicott, and O. Douglas Schwarz. The book will be of particular value to those studying and teaching comparative contact situations and to those interested in how semiarid regions are linked to worldwide human and economic networks.

This book contributes to recent debates about whether indigenous people maintained an ecological equilibrium in the days before contact and whether they had an environmental awareness that prevented them from degrading the land. Most of these authors agree that they did. They are worried about the present-day "desertification" of semiarid lands and most argue that in seeking to achieve ecologically sound management of these lands much can be learned from the indigenous societies that demanded less from dryland resources and avoided despoiling their surroundings. Most are also seeking solutions to problems now faced by the indigenous populations marginalized by industrial society.

A criticism that might be raised is that indigenous adaptive strategies were more complicated than suggested here, particularly in the introduction where an effort to bring unity to the issues raised conceals complexity. It is argued for example that for religious as well as practical reasons agriculture was resisted by indigenous people of the Great Plains. Illustrative of this attitude were the words of a Shoshone chief whose reply was "God damn a potato!" when told to learn farming. This does not represent the full spectrum of opinion and response, however. Many Plains people proved

*The Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Insight and Industrial Empire in the Semiarid World.* Edited by Paul A. Olson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Index. x + 317 pp. \$35.00.

The essays in this innovative and significant book look at the effects of European occupation on the people and the environment of semiarid regions on several continents. It is the book's comparative and interdisciplinary approach that

eager and able to farm when their former means of subsistence failed. A variety of factors including discriminatory policies intervened to prevent most from becoming commercial farmers, factors dealt with in this volume by Barsh in the American context, and by Silitshena in the South African context.

It is unfortunate that with the exception of Bennett's article there is little on the Canadian Plains. The essays of Saskatchewan scientist Stan Rowe, recently collected as *Home Place: Essays on Ecology* (1990) would have fit in well with the themes and interdisciplinary approach of this book. Rowe believes we need a profound change in how we think and feel about the land and although he does not specifically refer to Native American beliefs when outlining the concepts that must guide land use in the future they are the same as those described by Callicott and Schwarz in this book. It is far from idealistic or romantic to suggest that we must learn to care for the land that supports life; it is a necessity.

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