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Review of *The Indianization of Lewis and Clark* by
William Swagerty

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Indianization of Lewis and Clark. By William Swagerty. Foreword by James P. Ronda. Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2012. xl + 778 pp. Illustrations, notes, tables, maps, photographs, bibliography, index. \$90.00.

This two-volume work sets out to chronicle and analyze the process of change experienced by the men of the Corps of Discovery as they traveled through the homelands of diverse American Indian cultures on their way to the Pacific and back. Doubtlessly, an undertaking as bold and arduous

as the Lewis and Clark expedition altered those who experienced it. One could examine these changes a variety of ways. Here, author William Swagerty focuses on the intersection between Euro-American and Native American cultures—the point at which white men traded aspects of their culture for those of the people they had been meeting. Swagerty, drawing on previous work on transculturation—a process of integrating elements of an outside culture by individuals rather than societies—terms the process *Indianization*.

Without adequate maps it is difficult to comprehend the journey of such immense geographic scope. The seven good maps in the two volumes are essential to a visual understanding of the expedition's various routes, the location of Plains tribes, and the origin of Corps members. Several tables present detailed data about the expedition members' interaction with Sacajawea, their diet, and their ultimate fate. Far more numerous are the illustrations, although these are uneven in their usefulness. Reproductions of journal entries are only useful when they contain illustrations. Since many representations of the Corps' journey are fanciful, created long after the event, their value here is questionable. Several seem to contribute little to our understanding of the book's argument.

An important precursor to this work is the classic *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* by the author of this book's foreword, James P. Ronda. This 1984 publication was the first serious study of the expedition's interaction with Natives. Ronda traced the Corps' journey chronologically; Swagerty approaches the material more thematically. Thus we have chapters on outfitting, food, technology, and transportation, and even "caressing." With Ronda's book, scholars of the Plains could move to those chapters chronicling Lewis and Clark's time in the region. In Swagerty's volumes those interested in a specific region or Native culture will have far more difficulty exploring their interest.

This work of 770-plus pages contains incredible detail; at times one could wish for less. Casual readers or those expecting a study of Native interaction might chafe at forty-five pages devoted to the material culture of white America. I'm not

sure I agree with the author's assertion that to understand the Corps' changes in clothing style I need a twenty-six-page review of military dress back to the American Revolution. Although its research is impressive and its content exhaustive, this study will not meet the needs of those looking for an insightful examination of the interactions between two cultures. Because it focuses on the lives of the white explorers, readers seeking an understanding of the influencing Native cultures should look at *Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes*, edited by Alvin Josephy (2006). Similarly, *Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country: The Native American Perspective*, edited by Frederick Hoxie and Jay Nelson (2007), offers readers an intriguing look into the cultures on the other side of the *Indianization* process.

At the end of this two-volume work, the reader is still left with the question "So what?" While no one believes that two years of contact with Native peoples would leave an individual entirely unaltered, neither can we take at face value Lewis's assertion that he had been "completely metamorphosed" into a "complete Indian." Swagerty admits that neither Lewis nor Clark nor many of their men took cultural changes back home with them. In fact, although Lewis had little time to construct a postexpedition legacy, Clark left a troubling record of callous indifference toward the fate of those Native people he administrated. It seems that the process of Indianization, while an interesting culture phenomenon, left little impact on history. *The Indianization of Lewis and Clark* does what its author says it will—"focus on the material and cultural adaptations by a small group engaged on a diplomatic and scientific mission across western North America." What I'm not sure it does is substantially alter our understanding of the expedition and its place in American history.

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