“Indigenous Power in The Comanche Empire”


Pekka Hämäläinen’s The Comanche Empire reflects critical historiographical turns—indigenous power, responses to settler colonialism, and a reorientation of perspective—while uncovering new directions in American Indian history. Moreover, his four-part framework for understanding power—spatial control, economic control, assimilation, and influence over neighbors—provides a useful model for analyzing indigenous polities in other places and times. However, by not explicitly framing the narrative of the Comanche empire within notions of sovereignty, Hämäläinen leaves open opportunities for other scholars of the Comanche and of Native North America. Future historical studies of Native sovereignty, though, should include tribally specific notions of sovereignty and ways of knowing and remembering the past.

Available online