

Lecture #4: Co-Invasion: Some Bigger Creatures

Suggested Readings:

Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 1983; and "The Winning of the West: Expansion of the Western Sioux...", *Journal of American History*, 65 (Sept. 1978), 319-43
Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 1986; Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, & Steel*, 1997; *Collapse*, 2004
John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, 1955; Robt Denhardt, *Horse of the Americas*, 1947/1975
Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*, 2008.

Outline:

I. Co-Invasion Considered in the Abstract

epidemic diseases were critical to success of Europeans in N. America; strong contrast with Asia and Africa, where disease environments contributed to European failure
how do we evaluate different possible causes of European success? (conquest ideology, religion, technology, production system, state structure, capitalism, trade, etc.)
Crosby thesis: European expansion most successful in "Neo-Europes" where biological co-invaders allowed Europeans to reproduce bio-cultural systems: US, Canada, New Zealand, Argentina, Australia
biological determinism: how much does environment as opposed to human agency determine human history?
most famous recent example is Diamond's *Guns, Germs, & Steel*: geography determines cultural success
however we answer, fundamental insight re linked histories of humans and other organisms still central

II. Fellow Travelers

each of our biological companions has its own story, won't even try to catalog here
among most important were the large domesticated mammals: sheep (meat, clothing, rise of woolen clothing); cattle (beef, milk/dairy, leather, power); pigs (labor-free meat)
importance suggested by willingness of colonists to carry aboard ship: animals as survival tools, as signs of reproduced society, as wealth, as market goods
complicated modifications of environment needed to sustain: meadows, pastures, barns, hay
central task: reproducing a familiar landscape in the midst of an alien world

III. The Horse: Whose Co-Invader?

horse had many virtues over cattle: not much meat/milk, but speed, control, movement, power
important role in early military encounters: conquistadors from Iberian horse soldiers
horse spread throughout Spanish colonies: export hide/tallow industry, ranches, vaquero tradition, horseback handling of cattle
wild horses proliferate through much of South American grasslands, expand into N America
consider ways in which Indians choose to integrate these wild horses into cultural world
danger of thinking of horse as "European" organism or technology supporting "European" empire
invention of Great Plains cultures: acquire horses from south, become skillful in use, gradually move farther onto Plains to become great horseback buffalo hunters
abstract issue here: Nature provides range of choices, but people select differently: why?

IV: Making Choices

diversity of Indian choices concerning horse quite remarkable (note work of R. White here)
traditional story: horticulturalists of eastern Plains abandon to become horseback bison hunters. this apparently not true: no horticulturalists entirely gave up corn
Comanches of TX area lived in grassland with mild winters where horses reproduced easily; became horse herders first, bison hunters second, ate horses and traded them north
more northern tribes had to face harsher winters; fodder ran short, so had to cut young cottonwood growth, encouraged depletion of tree, eventual prob of winter starvation
winter horse deaths meant need for replacement, so rise of raid/trade pattern typical of Plains tribes: theft of horses from neighbors, major male activity
starvation suggests horse/bison economy precarious: tribes like Teton Sioux who adopted it were hunter-gatherers, not horticulturalists, even less reliable subsistence
horticultural Indians of eastern Plains, Missouri R (Mandans, Hidatsas, etc.) could raise and store much more reliable food base, traded with Sioux, hunting much less important
dense sedentary villages: but these more susceptible to epidemic than scattered Sioux
by late 18th-c epidemics, Mandans and others declining in power while Sioux increased, more raiding by latter of former, gradual movement of Sioux west toward bison herds, south toward areas where horses being raised, general pressure on other tribes
but cf. Pawnees and other horticulturalists: still didn't abandon crops. rather, integrated horses into old cycles. keep horses and crops separate, and provide winter fodder by burning grasslands near villages to promote growth, ritual integration
chief point: note diversity of horse's "co-invasion": one horse species could be many things to many different people. If so, whose empire is expanding in Crosby's eco-imperialism?