

Sami Lakomäki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 344 pages, ISBN: 978-0-300-1806-9.

Finnish cultural anthropologist Sami Lakomäki has written a splendid study of the Shawnee people, exploring their cultural history from early contact through to the nineteenth century. Lakomäki's approach is very challenging, as he tackles the issue from an internal Shawnee perspective. He traces the history of the Shawnee people through statements left by the Shawnees themselves, albeit, mostly in colonial and American documentary collections. He brilliantly discusses the Shawnee diaspora and the eventual "gathering together" over the centuries. Lakomäki argues that while the Shawnees never developed a centralized government, the unifying element that bound them together was their connection to the land and a shared belief in a common "supreme" power. The Shawnee diaspora and "gathering together" should be seen as a dynamic historical process in which the Shawnees were active agents in shaping their own society, for example by creating borders and by searching for new strategies in the contested colonial world. Certainly, their fate was strongly affected by colonial and capitalistic powers, but the Shawnee agency in this process was far more complex than has traditionally been recognized. By employing this approach, Lakomäki gives a voice and agency to the Shawnees. In Lakomäki's research, the Shawnees are not merely passive onlookers to colonialism or American imperialism, but active participants in the events affecting them. Lakomäki, moreover, reconstructs the Shawnee past by using cultural concepts and societal constructs that derive directly from the Shawnee people themselves, resulting in a thoughtful analysis of Shawnee identity and their sense of belonging.

By reconstructing Shawnee history from the early contact period to the nineteenth century, Lakomäki creates a powerful narrative that shows how the Shawnees, rather than being a "wandering people," had a strong feeling of cohesion and unity that eventually gave them a strong sense of peoplehood and nationhood. The terms peoplehood and nationhood are, of course, difficult, even controversial, but Lakomäki addresses the issues with a lengthy discussion of both terms. By using his deep understanding of Shawnee culture Lakomäki avoids traditional pitfalls, such as overt generalizations.

Lakomäki also shows convincingly how the Shawnees reconstructed and

rebuilt their society to meet outside pressures. The Euro-American threat required novel approaches and strategies which lead to new innovations in Shawnee attempts to find a common ground in building what could be called the Shawnee nation. These new strategies ranged from military co-operation to co-operation between towns, councils and clans. While consensus could not always be reached, there was a common idea of identity that was based on land and culture. The Shawnees also actively sought various strategies to not only *answer* the colonial pressures but to *exert their own influence* on the colonial powers. This study shows that the Shawnees, like many other Indian tribes, were a powerful presence in colonial America, and their presence is far more complex and significant than traditional historical narratives warrant.

Lakomäki's approach is certainly challenging. As all ethnohistorians know, sources by Native Americans themselves are scant. This is especially true in studying the early period of contact, as is the case in the present study. One of the key problems of course is language. Even Lakomäki has been forced to rely on Shawnee accounts that have been translated into English during councils and meetings. This of course leaves us with the question of terminology and how the Shawnees actually used concepts like peoplehood or nationhood. Yet, Lakomäki's deep understanding of Shawnee culture and his ability to contextualize these historical sources mostly overcome these challenges, and we can truly hear the Shawnee voices through these documents. The clarity and fluency of Lakomäki's writing makes the reading of this book a pleasant experience and truly gives new insights into not only the Shawnees, but also to the history of North America East of the Mississippi River.

Gathering Together is an exemplary work of ethnohistory, and everyone doing Indigenous Studies will find this study worth reading. It will, no doubt, make an impact on the way indigenous studies will be carried out in the future.

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