

## Lecture #5: 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

Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (2009)

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)

### Outline:

#### I. Co-Invasion Considered in the Abstract

epidemic diseases were critical to success of Europeans in North 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?

best-known recent example is Diamond's *Guns, Germs, & Steel* (1997): 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; Hämäläinen's recent work

suggests the extraordinary extent of their influence and political power as a result

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 contrast this with 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": a single species – the horse – could be many things to many different people. If so, exactly whose empire should we say was expanding in Crosby's eco-imperialism?