

## Book Review

*Arizona, A History*. Thomas E. Sheridan. Tucson: University of Arizona Press 2012. 484 pp.

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Thomas Sheridan's devotion to his subject matter is apparent in the new edition of *Arizona, A History*. He painstakingly brings together various narrative strands and a range of sources to create a highly readable text. His deeply personal commitment to the narrative is evident in the book's new preface, in which he describes how family circumstances brought him to post-World War II urbanizing Arizona, but more individual desires led him to explore less visited, rural parts of the state. His rich descriptions of the desert throughout the book—even those parts described as “hot, parched, and desolate” (p. 399) by early settlers and travelers—convey a sense of respect for the land and “the mystery and grandeur of the West” (p. ix). At the same time, however, Sheridan's is a scholarly text, and so he problematizes the very idea of the West, acknowledging its power in shaping social relations. It is the dialectical tension between the American West and the East, the urban and rural, private and public, and the individual and the social that enables Sheridan to tell his story and to reflect upon his place in it.

As noted in reviews of this book's previous edition (Fontana 1996), unlike many histories, Sheridan's text is organized according to processes, rather than by dates or significant events. These major processes—incorporation, extraction, and transformation—frame his political-ecological analysis, which examines global and local interactions between humans and nature and how these processes brought Arizona into the “modern world system” (p. 1). It is in these interactions where we see power operating through the silencing of voices, the production of discourses about

the people and the land, the distribution of resources, and the reproduction of inequality. His theoretical framework enables Sheridan to foreground various often-hidden actors, such as White Mountain Apaches, Yavapais, Akimel O'odham, Mexican-Americans, and others. In doing so, he reveals the multiple actors, histories, and perspectives that shape the landscape.

In documenting these perspectives, Sheridan narrates a complex struggle of contradictory actions and outcomes. If the New Deal saved American capitalism as many have claimed, we can also see this outcome in Arizona where New Deal policies favored large farms and ranches over smaller businesses, which were then pushed out of business. And, though Sheridan acknowledges private industry's dependency on the U.S. Federal Government for in-kind and monetary support, he cautions readers against relying on monolithic concepts about the state to understand the history of Arizona, pointing instead to the variety of actors who have shaped the landscape. As an example, he argues that the railroads were at least as, if not more important than, the U.S. Army in Arizona's incorporation into U.S. territory. Moreover, he constantly reminds the reader that despite ongoing efforts to marginalize Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, southern Arizona was Mexican territory at one time, a history that he explores in more detail in previous work (Sheridan 1986).

Sheridan personalizes the processes of incorporation, extraction, and transformation by highlighting human stories, from that of Chiricahua resistance to relocation on reservations, to that of Lucy Flake, the wife of a Mormon missionary who settled in Arizona. Sheridan's compassion for his subjects comes through in his discussion of Tentville, a settlement of people who arrived in Arizona to take the "climate cure" for tuberculosis. Living in canvas tents apart from their families for fear of infecting them, Sheri-

dan writes, "Isolation compounded the physical miseries of these souls" (p. 240). He recites the memories of Dick Hall, who arrived with his mother at Tucson's Tentville as part of a migration to the state that transformed it from an inhospitable desert into a destination appreciated for its hot and dry climate. In his reflections of his childhood, Hall explains that he had to read to his mother from the foot of her bed at the risk of contracting her disease and, most heart wrenching for this reader, he and his brother could never hug or kiss her. Dick Hall's story shapes the contours of Arizona's land. He was not a political operator or a businessman, yet he and his family helped transform the state into a destination for migrants looking to improve their lives.

This edition's new penultimate chapter, "Arizona in the twenty-first century," brings the reader up-to-date with the state's recent struggles over social and natural resources. Mid-twentieth century plans to internationalize and promote economic growth in Arizona, Sheridan argues, have been thwarted by recent efforts to marginalize Latinos, de-fund education, and privatize state lands. Pointing out that Arizonans have sought to scapegoat Mexican migrants for difficult domestic economic conditions and for the violence of drug trafficking at the U.S.-Mexico border, he highlights recent legislation that marginalizes all Latinos in the state. Among others, these laws include English-only mandates, the abolition of La Raza studies in high school, and the infamous S.B. 1070 law, which requires police to determine the immigration status of people they suspect to be in the U.S. without authorization. Sheridan's comprehensive history assures the reader that these developments most certainly were not inevitable, but they are part of ongoing international, national, and local interactions that transform the land and its people.

**References Cited**

Fontana, Bernard L.

1996 Review of *Arizona: A History*. *Ethnohistory* 43(3):547-548.

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1986 *Los Tucsonenses : the Mexican community in Tucson, 1854-1941*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.