Steven Sabol. *"The Touch of Civilization": Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017. Pp. xii, 298. $65.00.

One of the most persistent criticisms leveled at the history of the American West is that it has been far too provincial in orientation. Though the discipline has done much to correct this during the past few decades, with countless publications as well as conferences put on by the Western Historical Association and the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association focusing on placing the American West in a global context, much of the history of American Indian peoples in the region has remained isolated from the global phenomenon of colonialism as well as the historical lens that it has offered. Steven Sabol's *The Touch of Civilization* takes these comparisons head on, examining how the Kazakhs operated within the context of the expansion of Russia and how the Sioux tribes dealt with the influx of American settlers during the nineteenth century. In delving into the history of colonialism—as well as settler colonialism—as it impacted the Kazakhs and the Sioux, Sabol's absorbing work exists as a subset of the idea of comparative colonialism, in that it compares the internal colonization of Native peoples by an expanding colonial power.

Sabol, who focuses on Kazakh history, begins by noting the disagreement within the historical profession over the utility of such comparative studies, but points out that both contemporary authors and earlier historians, such as Henry Nash Smith writing in the 1950s, noted the similarities (geography and some aspects of Native culture) between the histories of the Kazakhs (or, as the Russians and Europeans called them and many other people of the steppes, "Tatars") and the tribes of the Northern Great Plains. Both dealt with expanding nations extending their sovereignty over the traditional peoples of their regions. As Russians sought to colonize the steppes to the southeast of their home region during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, they came into lands held by different Kazakh hordes, who had different cultural norms, different power structures, and different attitudes toward sharing the land with the Russians. As the United States moved west during the nineteenth century, it came across many of these same diversities among the Native peoples of the Great Plains. The Russians and Americans reacted to this interaction similarly, by stereotyping both the Kazakhs and Sioux as "barbarians" and "savages" in need of their civilizing influence.

The study also spends much-needed time qualifying its conclusions by focusing on the differences (time period and population size) between the Native groups, and this is where Sabol's book shines in terms of its ability to contextualize comparative histories. Discussing the differences in the perceived nomadism of Kazakh and Sioux cultures, Sabol is successful in demonstrating how the Russians and Americans sought to force a more sedentary existence on the people. This demonstrates how the expanding empires engaged in settler colonialism, in that they sought to replace the Native culture with an adapted version of their own, and in the process gain access to the lands and resources that would no longer be needed by the now sedentary Native groups. Both groups experienced difficulties in making the leap from a seminomadic existence to forced sedentarism. The Kazakhs had a much longer history focused on finding grazing for their herds of sheep, goats, camels, and horses over many centuries, while the Sioux had come to a more nomadic existence more recently, moving westward from their sedentary villages in Minnesota to the Northern Plains, and adapting their culture to fit the hunting of buffalo during the hundred years prior to the onset of American expansionism.

Sabol also notes the differences between Russian and American colonial strategies, in that the Americans, focused on taking the lands and assimilating the Native people into American society, operated by means of treaties with the tribes until 1871. The Russians worked to integrate the Kazakhs into Russian society, but were less concerned about forcing the Kazakhs and other peoples to give up their traditional cultures. Both groups, however, resisted these changes, sometimes violently. Sabol's main victories in comparing these colonial experiences are placing them into a wider context of settler colonialism and demonstrating that both the Russians and Americans used the lessons learned in these internal colonial episodes as instructive once they sought to extend their empires overseas, with the Russians applying these lessons in Alaska during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the Americans in the Sandwich Islands, Cuba, the Philippines, and elsewhere during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This notable study focuses on the cultural backgrounds of both the colonizers and the subjects of colonization and on the processes that both colonial powers utilized in accomplishing their hegemony over the land. As such, it succeeds admirably, and should form a useful template for future comparative studies. In placing the processes of colonialism in a global context, Sabol's study stands as an excellent example of the historical lens of settler colonialism. While successful, this focus on context and process sometimes obscures the impact of colonialism on the local level. Certainly, were a study to undertake that type of analysis along with the metahistory that Sabol demonstrates here, the work would be much larger, and many of the details might obscure Sabol's goals. However, in order for a true understanding of the processes to be formed, the local view should also get some attention, and in so doing, the religious aspect of colonialism, to which Sabol gives limited attention, would be more prominent. None of this, however, detracts from what Sabol has accomplished here: a comparative history that leads to compelling conclusions while fully embracing the historical differences between the two cases, which in itself is a significant accomplishment.

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