

*Ordeal of Change: The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors*¹

By Frances Leon Quintana²

With an Afterword by Richard O. Clemmer³

Reviewed by Michael S. Burney⁴

I accepted the invitation to review *Ordeal of Change: The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors*, by Francis Leon Quintana without hesitation for several reasons. I am a former student of the late Omer C. Stewart, a distinguished anthropology professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder; I have worked with a variety of Indian tribes since 1987; and during the early 1990s, I worked with the Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, Northern Ute, and Jicarilla Apache. My good friend, colleague, and the previous historian for the Southern Ute Tribe, Alden B. Naranjo, authored the foreword for a recent work undertaken on behalf of Valmont Butte, Boulder County, Colorado (Burney, Danenberg, and Affleck 2004). Lastly, I have lived in Taos, New Mexico, for the past nine years—in the country of the Taos and Picuris Pueblos, Ute, Jicarilla Apache, and Navajo Reservations, and certain communities of Hispanic ethnicity. Cimarron, New Mexico, a short distance east of Taos, was one of the Indian Agency headquarters for the Utes and Jicarilla Apache. This short, beautiful drive takes you over Palo Flechado Pass and across the Moreno Valley past Angel Fire and Eagle Nest, through Cimarron State Park, and, finally, into the small, historic community of Cimarron.

Quintana notes how the Utes and Jicarilla Apache spent their summers camping in the area of what is now called the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado, nestled against the west flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains along the east side of the San Luis Valley (p. 67). A lake near the Great Sand Dunes is where Pueblo Indians from Arizona and New Mexico traditionally believe

their souls emerge from the underworld at birth... By that lake their souls return to the underworld after death (Brigham 1931:39).

The National Park Service acknowledges that the Jicarilla Apache continue their ancient tradition of collecting sand from the dunes for ceremonial

uses. Frequently, cars and vans of Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and Pawnee from Oklahoma are seen as they travel through Taos. Their individual tribal license plates easily identify their place of origin.

As noted in her volume (p. 3), Frances Quintana was a student of Omer Call Stewart (1908–1991) while completing her Ph.D. studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She received her degree in 1966. Omer Stewart was a handsome man, distinguished yet approachable as an applied anthropologist who spent the better part of his life working with and for Indian people on various projects. Stewart began his incredible career at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1945, serving as the Department of Anthropology's first chairperson (Cassells 1997:317–318). I had the honor of knowing him and privilege of attending his last class (Native American Religions) prior to his retirement as a professor emeritus in 1974.

I spent many hours visiting with Dr. Stewart while he continued to visit his university office and library during his retirement. In time, Omer gave me a key to his office, inviting me to access his priceless collection of data culled during his years of fieldwork with the Ute and other tribes. His research is well known and his publications on the Ute, as well as championing the right to use peyote among native peoples. Out of admiration and respect for him and the sanctity of his office I never used that key. I just could not go in without him being there. But I still have it in my possession as a keepsake.

Stewart passed away in 1991, and I was honored to attend his memorial service on January 25, 1992, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Boulder. An extraordinarily humanistic anthropologist and devoted follower of the peyote road, he profoundly influenced my outlook of what anthropology would eventually become for me—a life of working with native peoples using both grassroots and academic platforms to further their goals. Omer was proud of the fact that he

had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church. He inspired many people over the course of his life and career.

While at the University of Colorado, Quintana provided assistance to Stewart, who was working with the Southern Ute Agency records archived at the Records Center (FRC) in Denver, Colorado, as part of a Tri-Ethnic Project. Her effort was published in Stewart's *Ethnohistorical Bibliography of the Ute Indians of Colorado* as "Appendix A, Analysis of Records of the Southern Ute Agency, 1877 through 1952, National Archives RG 75" (Stewart 1971). I have a copy in my office and have relied on it many times for its valuable and useful information. Quintana previously published *Pobladores: Hispanic Americans of the Ute Frontier* in 1991, which also came out as a second revised edition, *Los Primeros Pobladores: Hispanic Americans of the Ute Frontier* (Quintana 1991).

During her work at the Denver Federal Records Center Quintana compiled data on the first 50 years (1877-1926) of the Southern Ute Agency located on the Pine River (Río de los Pinos), where the present-day community of Ignacio, Colorado, now stands. These records, alongside informant recollections, provide the basis for this volume—a penetrating and candid look at a small group of native people, ancestral to Colorado, known as the Utes. (The Utes were not just ancestral to Colorado but to Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, and other states as well.)

Despite being stereotyped as a so-called mountain people, abundant evidence shows that Utes were just as comfortable hunting buffalo and living on the plains, as were later tribes such as the more publicized Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa. Although the expansive "parks" of Colorado, including the San Luis Valley, are within the central Rocky Mountains, they exhibit a plains-like environment known as *game bags*, replete with vast herds of buffalo, elk, deer, bear, mountain sheep, coyotes, wolves, and other animals traditionally used by indigenous inhabitants.

Quintana's detailed and methodical research using the federal records mentioned above in her empirical analysis of the Southern Ute Agency effectively demonstrates the terrible hardships the Utes were routinely forced to endure. Chapter 5, "Statistics of Change," provides five tables

regarding vital statistics, education, livestock, property and livelihood, and the ratio of self-support to dependency.

Ordeal of Change is divided into four sections. Section One, comprised of four chapters, uses the archives of the Denver Federal Records Center for the Southern Ute Agency between 1877 and 1926 to investigate (1) the forced relocation of the Ute, primarily to Oklahoma or Utah but, in any case, *out of Colorado*; (2) the further taking of aboriginal lands through allotments to individuals, amounting to legal theft of tribal land; (3) the subsequent land and water issues that resulted from that theft; and (4) the powers exerted by the various Bureau of Indian Affairs administrators during this time period. Section Two provides a statistical approach to bolster Quintana's observations and conclusions. Section Three offers an analysis of the preceding statistical data, and Section Four contains Richard O. Clemmer's thoughtful and insightful afterword that serves as an epilogue.

Clemmer, a former tribal employee of the Southern Ute and currently a full professor of anthropology at the University of Denver, minces no words when providing an emotional but informed and honest portrayal of what the Ute experienced during their reservation history as a result of the assimilation policy of the federal government. Through the Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act for Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, which, among other provisions, isolated Indian children in boarding schools; through the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934, which was conceived by Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier; through the era of so-called termination of President Dwight Eisenhower; and through relocating Indians from their reservations to selected cities via designated urban relocation programs, the design was to "de-Indianize the Indians—that is, to make them into rural farmers of Christian faith" (pp. 115-116). Ironically, after all that has taken place since European contact and confinement on their reservation in 1877, the Ute Indian is still an Indian. As Clemmer optimistically shares, the Southern Ute Tribe has prevailed, remaining a viable cultural identity with a future.

To Quintana's credit, she offers her volume to

the emergence of a generation of young tribal scholars who intend to reexamine the history of their people for the benefit of future generations (p. xiii).

And, secondly, she offers it as a data base supportive of indigenous plaintiff's claims that

through negligence or malice, tribal funds may have been systematically looted under the aegis of the United States government. If this work can in any way help to redress these wrongs, it will make the long road from research to publication well worth it (pp. xiii-xiv).

Quintana's use of primary-source information, supplemented with oral recollections recorded between 1960 and 1962, has, indeed, provided a valuable contribution to these ends.

Quintana acknowledges research questions in *Ordeal of Change* that include:

- How did the Utes survive the first 50 years of reservation life? And
- What conditions did they face and in what ways did these conditions change over the years? (p. 3).

Quintana's approach is to look at the cultural dynamics between the Southern Ute and their multi-cultural neighbors, primarily Hispanic. She examines United States government policies, and the administrators who were selected to uphold and enforce them, exposing aspects of indigenous reservation history generally glossed over or dismissed entirely.

The recent history of Colorado's native heritage, prior to and after European contact, most often appears to be of little consequence to the general public. This is not surprising in that this lack of interest carries over to Colorado's history overall. One drive through Colorado's rapidly urbanizing Front Range corridor from Fort Collins south to Pueblo quickly suggests why the intricacies addressed in *Ordeal of Change* may be of little interest to the general population. Lamentably, the same may be said of the overall cultural-resource management (CRM) community on such lands as public lands and Indian lands. Too few CRM studies devote enough attention to anthropology, ethnohistory, or history as it applies to contemporary Indians.

Deward E. Walker Jr. has been asserting this for years in his anthropology classes at the University of Colorado at Boulder. There are notable exceptions, of course. Archaeologists who have extensive experience working with Indian tribes are more numerous now than ever and increasingly make notable contributions to "tribal CRM" (Stapp and Burney 2002).

In the past, however, contract archaeologists, myself included, have understandably concentrated primarily on satisfying their federal permit requirements and focusing their efforts on recording cultural resources 50 years old or older. They assess the eligibility of those resources for the National Register of Historic Places, proposing data recovery or mitigation strategies designed to facilitate the host project's completion while "preserving" the now-extant site or sites. Sadly, American Indians have traditionally had little to do with this historic-preservation process. Starting around the early 1970s, though, tribes began taking greater control of their cultural resources. Three recent volumes—*Indigenous Archaeology: American Indian Values and Scientific Practice* (Watkins 2000), *Tribal Cultural Resource Management: the Full Circle to Stewardship* (Stapp and Burney 2002), and *Native Americans and Archaeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground* (Swidler et al. 2003)—punctuate this trend.

A number of tribes are now operating under the certification of the United States Department of the Interior as tribal historic preservation offices with jurisdiction on their respective federally recognized Indian reservations. Many other tribes handle their cultural-resource needs through other mechanisms, such as elder's committees, tribal archaeological and historical preservation programs, cultural committees, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) representatives, and so on. This trend of American Indians participating more fully in cultural-resource management issues requires a greater understanding of the tribes that predominate today, including the Southern Utes.

The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute nations are the only two land-based federally recognized Indian tribes in Colorado; and these reservations have been drastically reduced over time, effectively isolating them in the extreme

southwestern part of the state. Although prominent in this Four Corners part of the world where the states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona come together and share a geographic point, their influence is considerably diluted elsewhere. While the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute were able to remain in Colorado, the Northern Ute were removed to their present-day reservation, located in Fort Duchesne, Utah.

The stunning native architecture found throughout Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah contribute immensely to the general citizenry's appreciation for America's non-renewable prehistoric and historic peoples, as well as their culture and remaining resources. Nevertheless, outside these highly visible remnants of the past, the public exhibits little concern toward the well being of Colorado's cultural resources—or American Indians, for that matter. No blame or collective shame is intended in this observation. It is just that these topics have little real exposure in a public venue and are overlooked in today's busy and uncertain technology/information/cyber-oriented world in favor of other, more compelling priorities. Gaming may be one exception.

Authors Quintana and Clemmer admirably take on the very complex, heart wrenching, and all too often forgotten history of reservation-confined American Indians and their ability to survive under deplorable conditions and yet adapt and remain a distinct people and culture. The rate of cultural transformation experienced by the Southern Ute, as well as indigenous peoples in general, since European contact is unfathomable. Prior to the horse reintroduced to North America by the Spanish, they, like everyone else, were on foot. But their ancestral range encompassed at least 225,000 square miles in northern New Mexico, all of Colorado, eastern Utah, and southern Wyoming. They survived without steel, guns, kettles, knives, and the like. Of course, they also did without venereal diseases, alcohol, processed flour and sugar (central ingredients of the currently vilified fry bread), or commercial tobacco. In less than 200 years, the Utes evolved from a pedestrian to an equestrian people. They readily adopted the horse and riding accoutrement initially introduced by the Spanish.

As Quintana illustrates, the Utes had several centuries of experience with the Spanish prior to

any significant contact with Americans. Besides the Spanish, a few of their other well-known cultural contacts (and, with Ute concurrence, newly accepted tribal members) included the Jicarilla Apache, Navajo, Comanche, Taos and Picuris Pueblos, Paiute, and Oglala Sioux. Naturally, for several centuries considerable intermarrying and cultural exchange took place among the Utes, Spanish, and others. Quintana observes as much, even to the degree that

Some features of Hispanic kin organization were parallel to traditional Ute practice (p. 82).

The 1868 Treaty provided

any 'friendly' Indians whom the Utes might choose to admit to their reservation were to be included in the benefits of the Treaty (p. 83).

In addition, religious movements such as the Ghost Dance, Sun Dance, and Peyote Religion brought the Ute into close contact with other tribes as well: The Northern Ute with the Oglala Sioux and Wind River Eastern Shoshone and the Kiowa and Cheyenne-Arapaho of Oklahoma with the Southern Utes (pp. 83–84).

Whereas the Spanish were more accustomed to the Ute way of doing things, which fostered a mutual respect and acceptance of one another, the newly arrived Americans and their United States government generally found the Ute people and their way of life intolerable—something to be extinguished or confined and tightly regulated. Despite the Utes' several centuries of familiarity with the Spanish, the United States government discouraged or outright forbade their Ute captives from continuing their pre-confinement relationships with their Spanish friends. Rather, the Utes were required to closely conform to the Anglo model of an industrious Christian man taking part in farming and ranching pursuits. More to the point, perhaps, Quintana suggests that Hispanic employees were not held in high esteem by agency personnel because they

did not put the required degree of pressure upon the Utes *to hustle*, but rather worked with them at their own pace" (p. 81; emphasis mine).

Anyone with any experience working with or for

Indian tribes will immediately realize the folly of thinking Indians could be molded into any kind of Anglo-inspired model.

And yet, as noted by Quintana, if anyone were able to convince the Utes of the benefits of agricultural pursuits it would have been their old Hispanic neighbors, not the federal government. In fact, Quintana reports that soon after the founding of the Southern Ute Agency on the Río de los Pinos,

Hispanic Americans from communities in northern New Mexico and...the San Luis Valley...began to arrive (p. 78).

It is hardly surprising that the Hispanics converged on the new agency, considering the long history already established between the Hispanics and Utes of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Cross-cultural sharing, adoption, and modification had long taken place between the Ute and Spanish. The realistic ability of the newly arrived Europeans to quickly replace this longstanding relationship proved ill conceived.

With their numbers dramatically reduced, including many Ute elders who possessed the preponderance of oral history information; the land base of the Utes inconceivably shrunk; their traditional subsistence and lifestyle dangerously on the brink of collapse; and their traditional government and laws, social institutions, and other traditional components of their ancestral culture under assault made for a bleak picture. For the first time in their tribal history, their lives and well-being were now completely out of their control. If indeed there was a future for the Ute, it was unknown.

Quintana painfully takes us through the federal government's early attempts to acculturate the indigenous Ute hunter-gatherers into a farming-based economy and culture—in short, an Anglo farmer and/or rancher mode. At the same time the non-Utes could not have cared less what the Utes did as long as they did it in Utah—or anywhere else for that matter (p. 76).

To become fully rehabilitated, acculturated, and socialized, the Indian would be required to undergo a nearly impossible transformation. For example, adopting a cash economy and sense of private property are prerequisites to transforming oneself from an indigenous citizen of nature

into a civilized, "God-fearing" Christian instilled with a spirit to work the land, "harness nature," and acquire wealth in money, livestock, and goods. The traditional form of sharing was now viewed as a liability, rather than an asset.

Naturally, achieving this transformation required accepting a fixed residence, something completely foreign to hunter-gatherer societies. Assimilation might also include disenfranchising oneself from one's indigenous group, extended family, or tribe; renouncing one's native language, religion, and ceremony; and buying into "democracy" and Christianity. The bottom line—get rid of the Indian thing!

Indian boarding schools were seen by Anglos as vital to meet such a goal. By removing the child from his or her natural environment, s/he could more easily be molded into at least the likeness of an Anglo child. Many an Indian child, however, sickened and died. Quintana notes that between 1883 and 1885 at the Albuquerque Indian School, 12 out of 27 schoolchildren perished, including Ignacio's last child (pp. 18–20).

Native religious practices likewise were dissuaded by the dominant Anglo culture. Shamanistic medicine, once common among the Utes, became rare and is thought to have died out altogether in the 1960s. Christianity was embraced by some of the Utes, while others continue to adhere to other forms of religious belief and ceremony, such as the spring Bear Dance, the borrowed Sun Dance, and the Peyote Road.

Once the Utes were "pinned down" on their respective Colorado reservations, it was only a matter of time before various schemes were devised to "lawfully" steal more Indian land. The Allotment Act of 1887 was just one of endless means to accomplish the theft of Indian lands and resources. In any case, who was going to effectively oppose this seemingly inevitable course of history?

Quintana authoritatively examines the often conflicting and self-serving interests of the various agency superintendents who administered the disposal or "sale" of Indian lands for any number of contrived reasons under "Administrators' Conflicting Interests," (pp. 34–42). For example, one "reason" for disposing of inherited lands was termed "non-competent" lands, which was land in the hands of Indians who were

judged incompetent to become farmers (p. 32). "Surplus lands" also could be sold out from under the Indians. These lands were "left over" after relocating tribes to smaller reserves elsewhere, thereby opening up their "surplus reservation" to private ownership (pp. 51-52).

The Indians also had to contend with the high turnover of agents, superintendents, and clerks. During the first 50 years of reservation history, the 22 agents, superintendents, and their superiors repeatedly used their controlling authority to exact obedience from the Southern Ute. Although there are any number of well-meaning, dutiful superintendents, the system was nevertheless prone to abuse and graft—frequently with severe consequences to the Ute, who only expected the United States to fairly and reasonably comply with the terms of their 1868 treaty and Brunot Agreement of 1874.

Rations, annuities, and cash from Indian individual accounts could be dispersed or withheld depending on the superintendent's disposition and circumstances at the time. And beginning with the work-for-rations ruling of 1875, there was the newly conceived notion that able-bodied Utes were required to provide labor in exchange for their rations (p. 75). Nothing in the 1868 treaty or the 1874 Brunot Agreement stipulated that the Utes would be so required. Here again, the federal government made significant policy changes impacting the Ute without their prior knowledge, understanding, or consent. In the end,

While the purpose of the Agency was to guide changes leading to self-support among the Utes, its functions perpetuated dependency (p. 76).

Today, just as in the past, many Anglos taking up residence near Indian reservations have little or no previous experience, socially or professionally, interacting with these unique cultures—particularly within the jurisdiction of federally recognized Indian reservations fully exercising their sovereign authority. Then again, many Anglos have resided in proximity to reservations for several generations, successfully socializing and working with their Indian neighbors. Regardless, despite federal government efforts at intervention, it was noted for 1926 that

in the eyes of Agency personnel and Anglo-American neighbors, they remained stubbornly, irritatingly, and obnoxiously Ute (p. 3).

In Colorado, the Pike's Peak Gold Rush of 1858-1859 dramatically accelerated the contact between native peoples and Europeans from the East. The soon-to-follow discovery of gold within the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado further doomed the Ute to additional reduction of their aboriginal lands and priceless natural and cultural resources. Interestingly, despite the Brunot Agreement's recognizing the Utes' right to hunt animals and gather wild plants on the lands they had ceded, such as the San Juan Mountains, they were effectively prevented from doing so by claims to private land ownership, fences, intimidation, and violence (p. 1). Alongside the extreme diminishment of their aboriginal landholdings, within less than 20 years, all of Colorado's native tribes were vastly reduced in numbers through disease, starvation, exposure to the elements, warfare, abuse, confinement, and relocation to foreign and hostile environments.

In hindsight, Colorado's Utes stood no chance against such a backdrop of forced cultural change. The sheer numbers of immigrants and goods moving into the West would allow no other outcome than cultural genocide or removal. Yet despite all odds against them, and an ideology for their extinction, the Southern Utes have survived and continue to flourish. As noted in the preface by Quintana and in the afterword by Clemmer, agriculture, oil and gas production, other extractions based upon mineral rights, and tourism, with the Sky Ute Lodge and Casino, are integral parts of the Southern Ute's stable economic future (pp. xiii and 129-131).

If my tone appears overly harsh and critical of how history has treated the Utes, it is unavoidable. Humans and their societies and cultures are a part of nature; and as beautiful and harmonious as nature daily appears, it can also express itself in chaos and disharmony. Although I could understand, to the degree anyone can, why bad things were apparently unavoidable among people and peoples, I never could really accept the fact. In truth, although I began reading

about American Indians soon after learning to read, I made a conscious effort to stop subjecting myself to that period in our country's history that has been portrayed as free and glamorous but was, in fact, so terribly sad and tragic for America's native and non-native participants.

Quintana's *Ordeal of Change: The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors*, alongside Clemmer's epilogue, portrays one Indian tribe's experience encountering a vastly different people, both incomprehensible and irreconcilable, along with new traditions, beliefs, technology, and culture; and they do it with candor and an honest sense of duty and justice. I applaud their careful and methodical use of the written record, informant recollections, and personal hands-on experience with the Southern Utes in preparing this work.

The volume makes a significant contribution to the Ute, specifically the Southern Ute, for education, research, and the ever-looming need for legal action. The book also makes a worthwhile contribution to contract archaeologists and anthropologists working in Colorado; federal land managers administering aboriginal Ute lands and resources; Colorado residents, particularly those residing in the southern and southwestern regions of the state; and politicians, including Colorado's governor and staff, to provide them with a quick study of the Southern Utes since their forced confinement on their reservation in 1877.

Is not all of this just water under the bridge, so to speak, and of little historical interest or contemporary applicability? Yes and no. The past is just that. But while we cannot change the past, we can use it to learn about the present and the future. Or at least that is the desired outcome of *Ordeal of Change: The Southern Utes and Their Neighbors*. The book reminds and helps us revisit a not-so-comfortable time in our state's early history through examining the Southern Utes' past. I cannot say I enjoyed reading what Quintana and Clemmer exposed about the sufferings and privations of Colorado's Utes. I have always been uncomfortable revisiting this period of history, but I am glad I did. Quintana and Clemmer provide a great deal of detailed information in *Ordeal of Change* that was new to me. As a result I would like to think that I myself could be a better neighbor to the Utes. ○

Notes

1. Lanham, Maryland: Alta Mira Press, A Division of Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers, 2004. 173 pages, dedication, maps, photographs, tables, abbreviations, preface, acknowledgments, eight chapters, afterword, notes, bibliography, index, about the authors. Cloth, \$72.00 and paperback, \$24.95 U.S.

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