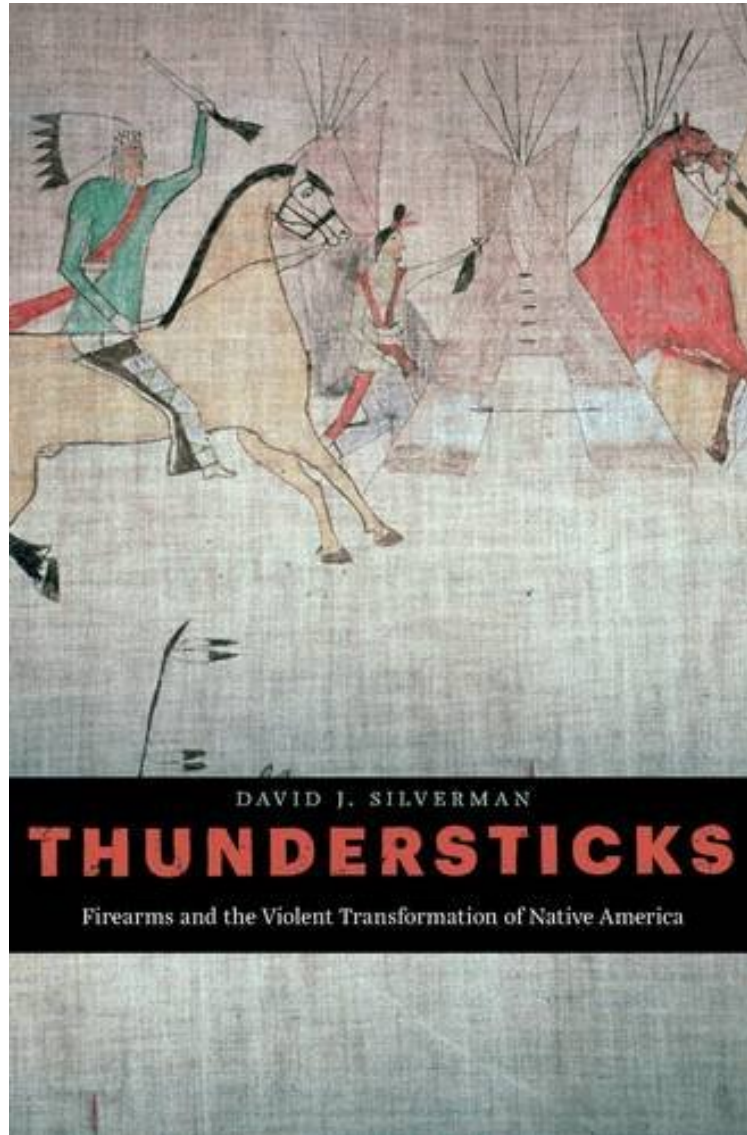


Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America

David J. Silverman

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David J. Silverman : Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating and important: the role guns played in American and Native American history
By Alice Friedemann
This is a must read book that I found hard to put down. It should be read because it tells about the role guns played in the decimation of Native Americans. After reading this book, I thought that perhaps as many died in gun battles between tribes as died from small pox and other diseases (though well never know for sure). Native Americans were brave, strong, clever, and strategic in how they used guns to transform their culture. Perhaps if they had a greater population they could have fended off colonization, though disease and the immigration of millions and enormous birth-rate of colonists almost certainly doomed them. It's an enormous tragedy that Indians used guns to kill and capture slaves from other tribes to swell their own numbers lost to battle and disease and to gain wives, as well as selling other natives to Europeans for the slave trade in exchange for guns. The one time Native American leaders had the vision to try to unite tribes against European colonization failed (i.e. Pontiac's War in 1763.) The complete history of the role guns played in tragedy and hundreds of thousands of deaths in gun battles between native Americans has never been told of before as far as I know, though *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West* covers the U.S. Army wars against Native American tribes after the Civil War. I've read several other books lately on the true history of America, not the simplified patriotic pablum we learned in school, so I also recommend: *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America--The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675*, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, *The Making of Donald Trump*. If more Americans had read this before the election, Trump never would have been elected. My full review of this book is at [energyskeptic](#).
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An insightful and revealing read...couldn't put it down!
By Adrian Peg
I got this book from a library but I had to get it for my library. Mr. Silverman has enlightened me to a big hole I had in Native American/American history. So much so that I am now reading some of the research books he used in this insightful historical account. Thank you Mr. Silverman!
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. How European guns affected relationships between Native American groups--
By Philly Shopper 4531
Pathbreaking account of the impact of guns on Native American life. Very creative use of sources, and a riveting and surprising story. Well written and engaging.

The adoption of firearms by American Indians between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries marked a turning point in the history of North America's indigenous peoples—a cultural earthquake so profound, says David Silverman, that its impact has yet to be adequately measured. *Thundersticks* reframes our understanding of Indians' historical relationship with guns, arguing against the notion that they prized these weapons more for the pyrotechnic terror guns inspired than for their efficiency as tools of war. Native peoples fully recognized the potential of firearms to assist them in their struggles against colonial forces, and mostly against one another. The smoothbore, flintlock musket was Indians' stock firearm, and its destructive potential transformed their lives. For the deer hunters east of the Mississippi, the gun evolved into an essential hunting tool. Most importantly, well-armed tribes were able to capture and enslave their neighbors, plunder wealth, and conquer territory. Arms races erupted across North America, intensifying intertribal rivalries and solidifying the importance of firearms in Indian politics and culture. Though American tribes grew dependent on guns manufactured in Europe and the United States, their dependence never prevented them from rising up against Euro-American power. The Seminoles, Blackfeet, Lakotas, and others remained formidably armed right up to the time of their subjugation. Far from being a Trojan horse for colonialism, firearms empowered American Indians to pursue their interests and defend their political and economic autonomy over two centuries.

Silverman's compelling rediscovery of the gun frontier, imaginatively conceived and deeply researched, is a must reading. For nearly two centuries, indigenous peoples everywhere in North America waged devastating arms races with each other, enabled by, but seldom under the control of, Euro-Americans eager to sell their lethal wares in defiance of laws and their nations' interests. (Daniel K. Richter, author of *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Past*) After reading *Thundersticks*, no one will ever be able to question that guns were fundamental to colonialism and that American Indians wanted them, used them with ferocity, and that they changed Native life forever. Silverman makes it all so obvious in his utterly convincing and transformative book. He has literally rewritten American history. (Robbie Ethridge, author of *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715*) Tracking the impact of firearms across different eras and areas as Native peoples incorporated them into their arsenals, economies, foreign policies, and cultures, David Silverman shows how guns shaped the colonial and indigenous history of the continent. No one has done anything quite like this before. A major achievement. (Colin G. Calloway, author of *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army*) Silverman's command of a vast literature and his attention to evidence will put to rest any remaining doubts about the Indian preference for guns over the bow and arrow. (Gregory Evans Dowd, author of *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier*) Silverman tells this sad and bloody story with verve, making this an essential work for scholars of colonial encounters. (Publishers Weekly 2016-08-29) A good measure of a work of history is whether it changes the way we understand its subject. By that measure, David J. Silverman

succeeds admirably in *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America*. In Silverman's sober, sprawling account, America is a nation built on slaves and guns. (Thomas E. Ricks *New York Times Book Review* 2016-11-10) Focusing on the military and political changes stemming from the spread of firearms in North America, this is a well-informed, clearly argued account of the significance of access to these guns. Silverman's book is a significant contribution to a field that is important for American studies, for military history and work on western expansionism. (Jeremy Black *History Today* 2017-01-01) Written in an accessible and at times swashbuckling style, the book is in many ways a retelling of the U.S. Indian Wars from the 17th to the 19th centuries, with a twist. It cracks the mystery of how Colonial-era Native American tribes came to master a continent-spanning, gun-running network in smoothbore flintlock muskets, often decades in advance of European settlement. (Casey Sanchez *Los Angeles Times* 2016-12-23) About the Author David J. Silverman is Professor of History at George Washington University.