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**Reviewed by** Mark van de Logt (Department of History, Oklahoma State University)

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## Encounters in American Indian History

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This sequel to *American Encounters: Natives and New-comers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500-1850* (New York: Routledge, 2000), brings together some of the best scholarship in Native American history to appear in recent years. The editors combed through recent academic journals and monographs in search of essays that “challenged accepted narratives, shifted the focus from institutions to Native people, and drew upon insights from a variety of disciplines” (p. xiv). Rather than viewing American Indians as unfortunate victims of “Manifest Destiny,” the essays collected here take the position that Indians did not accept defeat, but continued the struggle for self-determination long after the United States established its hegemony. Rather than conquest, the editors prefer to speak of “encounters,” which more accurately describes the ongoing process of Indian cultural persistence and adaptation.

The basic theme of resistance, adaptation, and survival runs throughout the twenty-three essays of the book. The essays in Part I discuss Indian resistance to reservation life and attempts by the United States to transform Indians into Anglo-Americans. Katherine M. Osburn shows that the Navajos at the Bosque Redondo reservation in New Mexico adopted certain innovations in order to survive the deplorable conditions on their agency, but they rejected others on the basis of their own cultural ways. Ironically, that same cultural persistence

prevented Oglala war leader Crazy Horse from keeping his coalition of tribes together against their forced relocation to reservations. Kingsley M. Bray points out that Crazy Horse’s attempt was doomed because Sioux society lacked a mechanism that granted too much power to a single man. As a result, the coalition fell apart and the Sioux found themselves struggling to maintain their cultural identity on the reservations. Indian-white relations on the northwestern frontier, meanwhile, differed greatly from those on the Northern Plains and New Mexico. In their study of Xwellas, a S’Klallam woman acquitted of murdering her abusive white husband in 1878, Coll-Peter Thrush and Robert H. Keller, Jr., suggest that the northwestern frontier was a place where Indians and whites interacted and depended on each other, rather than a place where “civilization” conquered “savagery.”

The essays in Part II, discuss the effects of the reservation experience on Indian cultures between 1880-1930. Melissa L. Meyer’s analysis of the White Earth Anishinaabeg in Minnesota suggests that reservations were not merely laboratories of acculturation, but could present real opportunities for Indians. Although many Anishinaabeg remained conservative, some took full advantage of these opportunities by adopting the market capitalist values of the dominant society. In his study of trading posts on the Navajo reservation, Robert S. McPherson argues that these posts also provided new opportunities. The Navajos overcame their fear of Anasazi remains and began a lively trade in Anasazi artifacts and also in-

creased home production of wool and rugs for a larger market. Rather than seeing trading posts as “tools of white imperialism,” McPherson argues that post-owners had to operate within the boundaries of Navajo culture. Confining Indians to a reservation, according to Thomas Biolsi, was not enough. The federal government believed that “progress” included the legal and bureaucratic incorporation of Indians into society. Through allotment and policies aimed at redefining “Indianness,” policymakers tried to strip Indians of their identity. While these policies indeed created a “new” Indian, they ultimately failed to do away with Indians as a distinct legal group.

The federal government’s attempt to redefine Indian gender roles is the major theme of Part III. Until the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the federal government supported policies aimed at instilling “Victorian” morals on the Indians. Here, too, we find interesting examples of Indian resistance as well as adaptation. Lisa E. Emmerich describes the field matron program, which sent out young women to the reservations to teach Indian women the “proper” way to take care of their households. Among the hundreds of field matrons were quite a few American Indian women, who had firsthand knowledge of the difficulties of acculturation. Ironically, the Indian Bureau questioned their loyalty to the program and began to employ fewer of them after 1905. This decision retarded the effectiveness of the program. According to Carol Devens the classroom became yet another battleground between Indians and whites as missionaries hoped to indoctrinate Indian girls in the virtues of Victorian morals in boarding schools around the country. Their efforts, however, were only moderately successful as mothers and grandmothers continued to exert a greater influence on Indian girls than the missionaries. In some cases, Indian women received support from unexpected sources. During the Pueblo Dance controversy of the 1920s, for example, “New Feminists” defended Indian dances that female reformers deemed immoral and offensive. The New Feminists believed the Indian dances expressed a more “natural” sexual code. As Margaret D. Jacobs points out, the controversy, in fact, tells us more about the tensions between conservatives and modernists within Anglo-American society, than about Pueblo society. Both sides failed to realize that the dances ridiculed and condemned loose sexual behavior.

Indian religious innovation and survival are the subject of Part IV. Here, again, it is hardly accurate to speak of a Christian victory over native traditions. Sometimes Indians successfully defended their own religious prac-

tices. In other instances, they fused Christian ideas with old traditions to create something new. As David Rich Lewis shows, the interaction between the traditional and the modern, created new identities that sometimes confused white Americans. William Wash, a prominent figure among the Ute Indians around the turn of the century, represented both the “progressive” and the “traditional” element of his people. A successful entrepreneur who appeared fully acculturated, Wash nevertheless defended Ute religious expressions such as the Sun Dance and the Peyote Church. On the other side of the continent, Anglo-Americans were equally surprised to learn about the persistence of witchcraft beliefs among the “progressive” Iroquois of New York. Sidney L. Harring describes the Iroquois’ determination to defend their freedom of religion and their tribal sovereignty in the state courts. Describing the Tlingits of Alaska, Sergei Kan shows how these present-day Christians remember their non-Christian ancestors. Today’s Tlingits respect the shamans of the past as deeply spiritual people who successfully incorporated native beliefs and virtues into the new faith.

Part V discusses the emerging cultural and political awareness of American Indians during the first half of the twentieth-century. Rather than disappear, Indians organized themselves to cope with and profit from the new America that began to emerge during the industrial age, while, simultaneously, protecting their heritage. Frederick E. Hoxie points out that while Americans “discovered” Indian art and other cultural expressions, many Indians went on a journey of discovery of their own. They discovered a number of professions that allowed them to participate in white society without having to renounce their Indian heritage. Some became anthropologists, others became writers, lawyers, politicians, and even religious activists. John C. Savagian adds that the efforts by Indian communities were crucial for the passage and success of John Collier’s Indian Reorganization Act. The Stockbridge-Munsee of Wisconsin, for example, organized their own business committee three years before the IRA was enacted. The success of this small Indian community eased passage of Collier’s plans in Congress. Terrence M. Cole, finally, describes the struggles of Alaska’s Indian populations against racism and segregation.

The activism of the first half of the century laid the foundation for the political and cultural revival that took place in the second half of the twentieth century, the topic of discussion in Part VI. Ward Churchill provides a brief historical overview of the American Indian Move-

ment and emphasizes the powerful effect this organization had on the ethnic consciousness of many American Indians. Clyde Ellis shows how this ethnic revival has boosted the popularity of Indian powwows. Although these festivals are relatively modern, they form a bridge between the present and the past, and as such are important manifestations of Indian culture. Joanne Nagel explains how renewed ethnic pride translated itself in the census figures between 1960 and 1990, when more American Indians began to feel confident to list their ethnic identity on the census records. Robert L. Bee points out that although Indians are now the fastest growing minority in the United States, they still lack the political leverage to direct the policies that affect them. As Congressmen try to avoid Indian issues, and the BIA is more concerned with self-preservation, Indians have come to rely more and more on the U.S. courts for direction. Over the past decades, they have learned how to use the legal system for their own purposes.

The final section of the book, "Perspectives on Native America, 2000," addresses contemporary issues. Ferguson M. Bordevich argues that "sovereignty" and "self-determination" may not be the panacea for the problems of Indian administration. While it is true that some

tribes, such as the Mississippi Choctaws, have made great progress, other tribes have become the victim of mismanagement. Vine Deloria, Jr., discusses the relationship between scholars and the Indian tribes they study. Researchers and tribes, Deloria argues, must establish a mutually beneficial relationship. Scholars should not exploit Indians for their knowledge, but also put something back into the community, preferably some form of financial support. Young scholars in Indian history and related fields must read this essay (this reviewer wished he had before starting his own research). Joseph G. Jorgenson briefly discusses the history of the "American Indian Gaming Regulatory Act" of 1988, which has opened new economic opportunities for some Indian communities. But, as Peter d'Errico reminds us in the last essay of the book, the future of such activities is not certain. According to d'Errico, Indian history reveals that the federal government will not hesitate to suspend Indian "sovereignty" whenever its own interests are at stake.

With d'Errico's somber conclusion we have come full-circle. It is clear that the Indian struggles for self-determination are not over. They will continue to fight for their cultural and political rights. As the essays in this book show, they have many wonderful things to fight for.

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