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Review of *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America* By James Wilson

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The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America. By James Wilson. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999. Maps, sources, further reading, index. xxix + 466 pp. \$27.00.

This general history proposes to offer a Native American perspective on Indian-Anglo contact. Wilson's approach is now fairly standard. He includes substantial quotes from collections of Indian origin traditions and general ethnographic descriptions of elements of Indian cultures, bringing the narrative into the 1970s with accounts of the Indian occupations of Alcatraz in 1969 and the Wounded Knee trading post in 1972.

Wilson's sympathetic telling of Native history leads to certain problematic interpretations. He describes Aztec leaders, for example, as holding flowers to their noses to counteract the unpleasant body odor of Spanish conquistadors who did not bathe, although Aztec sources describe combinations of flowers as a means of sustaining the powers of men in high office.

Wilson's history is a synthesis of secondary sources. He employs quotes from primary

sources he has gleaned from important books on American Indian history, thereby generating an air of credibility; but his bibliographic notes make clear that he is using quotes other scholars have enlisted to support their arguments. His sources are well chosen, but the latest date from the early 1990s and do not represent the most current scholarship. The more recent work of such influential scholars as Richard White and Francis Jennings is not included. He incorporates the standard events of conflict between Indians and Americans—Removal, Chief Joseph's flight from the Walowa Valley in Oregon, Standing Bear's suit against the government, the massacre of Lakota Ghost Dance adherents at Wounded Knee.

Where one gets the greatest sense of the continuity of American Indian cultures and their relationship to contemporary American cultures is in the chapter on the Great Plains. Introduced by a discussion of contemporary environmental arguments that the Plains should be returned to grasslands and buffalo, the chapter focuses on the impact of epidemic diseases and warfare on Plains people. It also includes an account of the Five Civilized Tribes—Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole—who were indeed removed to lands west of the Mississippi River, but whose territory in the eastern, mountainous region of what is now the state of Oklahoma did not resemble the true Plains region.

Wilson writes in an engaging narrative style. He follows the standard template for Native American history—quotes from origin stories, ethnographic descriptions, reliance on certain standard secondary sources, and a sympathetic stance that portrays Indians as victims of white aggression. The book is a useful synthesis that will appeal to a general readership. Historians will read it with discretion.

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