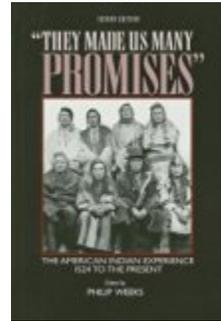


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Phillip Weeks, ed. *"They Made Us Many Promises": The American Indian Experience, 1524 to the Present*. Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2002. i-ix + 330 pp. \$9.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-88295-965-8.

Reviewed by Michael Rice (Department of History, Western Carolina University)
Published on H-AmIndian (December, 2004)



A Provocative and Informative Introduction

Phillip Weeks as editor of this volume provides an excellent, balanced, and constructively argued reader approachable for both the general and the more advanced reader of American Indian history. It provides a comprehensive and multi-dimensional presentation that addresses specificities of the American Indian historical experience from the European discovery of the Americas to the 21st century in the twelve chronological articles and four topical articles. Weeks performed his editorial duties well. The articles are integrated in topic and content, with each individual essay blending into the next, which gives outstanding continuity and flow to the book. In the first section of the book, "A World Turned Upside Down," the six articles cover the history of Indian-European in North America from the first encounters until the United States' final conquest of Native America in 1890. The first essay, "Black Gowns and Massachusetts Men: Indian-White Relations in New France and New England to 1701," sets the polycentric tone of the book. It places the encounter of Indians and Europeans, and their cultures, in a global context of the Atlantic world at the time of contact. While the author, James Ronda, focuses on the English and French colonization efforts, he also gives the Indian reaction to the invasion of their lands.

Dwight L. Smith, investigate the ambiguity and "middle ground" of Indian-European relations in the next article "Mutual Mistrust and Dependency: Indian-White Relations in the Era of the Anglo-French Wars for Empire, 1689-1763." As is usual in this book, the article picks up when the previous one leaves off, not only

chronologically, but also in terms of Indian-European relations. He gives a good brief factual account of those relations all along the frontier between English and French claims during that era. But, beyond the "official" relations of empire and high politics, he notes the interactions of common people whether Indian or European. In those relationships he finds a "middle ground" of tribally, ethnically, and racially mixed peoples who provided many necessary connections between the various groups. While often short-lived and overwhelmed by the larger forces of conflict and ethnocentrism, these mixed polyglot communities operated as a critical "middle ground" between the various competing groups.

Those same polycentric Indian-European also existed along the southwestern borderlands in North America between Spanish and Indians as David La Vere writes in "Facing Off: Indian-Spanish Rivalry in the Greater Southwest." He places the specificities of the local interaction of Indians and Spanish within the global context of its era. It is a good factual account of them through the United States acquisition of Louisiana in 1803, Mexican independence in 1821 and the eventual U.S. takeover in 1848 that accomplished the control of Native Americans that the Spanish sought throughout their domination of the region.

Theda Perdue's article, "The Trail of Tears—Removal of the Southern Indians in the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Era," is a masterpiece of historical writing. It combines the concise factual, theoretical, and thematic issues of

the topic into a smoothly integrated narrative. An excellently developed piece of historical writings highly recommended to any historian at whatever level of development.

The editor then contributes a superb article, "Blue, Gray, and Red—Indian Affairs During the American Civil War." The introduction paragraph connects the situation of the northern Great Plains with La Vere's article within the perspective of the Indian-White relationship, especially the western expansion of the Sioux and the United States into the region in the 19th century. Multitudinous factors like intra-tribal divisions, tribal conflicts, and American cultural values enter into his analysis of the situation. Weeks concludes that Indian resistance broke out during the Civil War not because of the withdrawal of troops, but due to the continuous migration of White Americans into the Indians lands of the region. The continuous warfare between the North and South pulled Indians into it. The harshness of all sides in these battles set the violent parameters of behavior that manifested itself in the Plains Wars of the next generation.

The final article of this first section, Thomas W. Dunlay's "Ambiguity and Misunderstanding-The Struggle Between the U.S. Army and the Indians for the Great Plains" continues from where Weeks left off. On the other side, most "Chiefs" lacked the executive power in their tribes that Whites thought they had to make deals and sign treaties. These and other mutual misconceptions of Indians and Whites about each other led to critical misjudgments by all, but the concept of "Indian resistance" was the creation of Whites who lumped all Indians into a single category of stereotypes. The U.S. Army then found itself caught between two conflicting missions: the need to mediate and regulate Indian-White relations, and their role as the enforcers of U.S. expansion. Dunlay characterizes the problem of violence between whites and Indians as "...the product of misunderstanding and the irresponsibility or bad judgment of persons of both sides, a pattern that would repeat itself many times in the future" (p. 106).

The second section, "Visions of a New Order," focuses on U.S.-Native American history from the reservation era through the 1970s. Donald J. Berthrong, in the section's opening article, "The Bitter Years: Western Indian Reservation Life," chronicles the destruction of the western Indian tribes world after the Civil War. That conquest concluded in creation of the U.S. reservation system. Not only was the land taken, but also their culture was to be

replaced by Euro-American culture for the young in special schools. With all avenues of power cut off, religions such as the Ghost Dance and the "Peyote Road" of the Native American Church. So began their cultural adaptation for survival.

David Wallace Adams chronicles that "cultural subjugation" via education in "From bullets to Boarding Schools: The Education Assault on American Indians. After the Lake Mohunk conference the Hampton and Carlisle schools were established. There Indian children were taught the meaning of "civilization," i.e. Euro-American culture, and its opposite "savagism," i.e. Indian culture. Adams not only gives the general perspective of the schools, but the specific routines Indian children faced upon attendance there. The children either could openly resist and be broken, internalize the white world, or passively resist to survive. By the 1920s the system had broken down as the Merriam Report noted.

The Merriam Report introduces Graham D. Taylor's "The Divided Heart—The Indian New Deal." Taylor analyzes John Collier's efforts, their successes and failures, as essentially rooted in the ambiguities of assimilation policies begun in the 1880s. Taylor concludes that those efforts laid the institutional foundation for Indian community revivals.

Donald L. Fixico analyzes the post-world War II U.S. government's policy in "Dislocated-The Federal Policy of Termination and Relocation, 1945-1960." In those termination policies the well-intentioned efforts of the Truman administration to eliminate discriminatory structures in Euro-American society led to the effort to mainstream Indians via termination. The Eisenhower administration continued this and then switched to relocation after 1954. But, the cultural alienation and shock of relocation, plus the low wages Indians could get led to profound alienation and its attendant behavior. But, Fixico notes it also created the concentrated urban Indian communities from which the activism of the 60s and 70s arose.

The final section, "The Night is Far Gone, The Day is Near," addresses themes of Native American history in four articles on Urban Indians, Native Sovereignty, Indian Women, and Burial Rights and Protections. Blue Clark, in "Bury My Heart in Smog—Urban Indians," employs sociological and anthropological materials to relate the history of Urban Indians since the 19th century. While the critical transition came after World War II, urban Indians began with conquest's completion in the 1880s as children were exported from the new reserva-

tions to Carlisle and Hampton schools. Off reservation labor contracts actually began in 1903, and urbanization occurred before World War II in the less dramatic fashion of concentric local rings flowing outward from the reservations. The article notes that post-World War II relocation and its urbanization of Indians simply transferred Indians' problems from the reservation to the city. But, the reassembling of Indian culture by urban Indians also created intra-tribal networks as well as with progressive whites, and most importantly led to a pan-Indian perspective.

Päivi Hoikkala's "Traditions and Transformations—American Indian Women and Historical Perspective," makes the essential point that while Indian women remain invisible in most historical accounts they remained essential to Indian culture and its survival through the preservation of oral traditions and the family. It takes a good polycentric perspective utilizing Native American oral traditions and Anglo-American and Hispanic-American histories of the encounters between Native and Euro-America.

The final article, James Riding In's "Our Dead Are Never Forgotten: American Indian Struggles for Burial Rights and Protections," addresses the culturally critical and politically divisive question of Western Science and

Native American spiritual beliefs concerning the dead. The article eloquently and forcefully documents the literal and philosophical deception, which came from the marriage of colonialism, scientific racism, and archaeology during the late 19th century as the U.S. conquest of Native America was completed. Native American resistance to these grave desecrations in the name of science was not effective until after the 1970s when legal efforts by Native American Rights Fund (NARF) began, and the 1991 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The article is provocative and passionately written, but its critique of western science and what it calls imperial archeology needs clarification. Where is the legitimate place for empirical scientific investigation in Native American history? Or do we automatically privilege any Native American oral tradition or discourse over western scientific investigation, whether social or hard sciences, simply because of its claim? If so, this is vulgar post-modernism at its worst, the structural privileging of discourse simply because it originates from a victimized group.

The text is written well, strategically edited for continuity and flow, provocative, and informative. It is a useful and informative read for beginners, undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty seeking a good one volume updating on the subject.

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Citation: Michael Rice. Review of Weeks, Phillip, ed., *"They Made Us Many Promises": The American Indian Experience, 1524 to the Present*. H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. December, 2004.

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