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Duanne Champagne, Karen Jo Torgesen, Susan Steiner, eds. *Indigenous Peoples and the Modern State.* Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2005. xi + 172 pp. $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7591-0798-4; $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7591-0799-1.

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Developing a Comprehensive Approach to North American Indigenous Studies

It is rare to be able to look at a moment in time and see the pivot point of change in a relationship. This is true between individuals, but it is equally true between political bodies. Anthony F. C. Wallace noted one such pivotal point in U.S. history. The event occurred in 1784 with the implementation of the United States' interpretation of the Treaty of Paris. America viewed Great Britain's Indian allies as conquered peoples and "that therefore the Treaty ... gave the United States and its several member states not only political sovereignty over, but also ownership of the soil of, all Indian territory south of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River and east of the Mississippi River."[1] For the Seneca who sided with Great Britain this was a radical change in status. No longer were they treated as a nation, but as a subject people. This was the beginning of a form of psychological warfare aimed at breaking the Indians' perception of themselves as nations, as independent, functional political units. Directed first toward the nations of the Northeast, this policy was generalized to the Southeast and then, with westward expansion, to all Indian nations. The policy became not only the foundation of U.S. government political culture, but popular culture as well.

With Mexico and Canada it is more difficult to pinpoint a moment in time when state policy and perception with regard to the Indian nations of North America comes so clearly into focus. Perhaps this is because of my own lack of familiarity with Mexican and Canadian history, and there are few attempts to look at the indigenous peoples of North America across the border of nation-state and histories. *Indigenous Peoples and the Modern State*, based on the 2002 Claremont Graduate University conference, is a rare exception.

One of the most difficult tasks in publishing is turning a conference into a viable text. The editors of this volume chose to publish the papers as delivered with little or no editorial influence or control. This was an attempt, perhaps, to preserve the excitement of this groundbreaking conference. The editors have attempted to fill in some of the gaps with their introduction and the inclusion of three chapters that summarize the discussion periods at the end of each session.

As indicated, both the conference and the subsequent publication are unique in a number of ways. First, the focus is on North America–Canada, the United States, and Mexico–in recognition that the boundaries of nations seldom agree with the territories of indigenous populations. Second, the focus is on North America–yes, I am repeating myself–in recognition that these three contiguous nations have distinct histories and differing relationships with their indigenous populations. Third, the conference attempts a transdisciplinary approach that draws experts from a variety of fields such as anthropology, sociology, and law. Finally, the point of view is always an indigenous one.

Following the organizational structure of the conference, the volume is divided into three parts: "Indigenous Identity and the State," "Culture and Economics," and "Trilateral Discussions: Canada, the United States, and Mexico." Part 1 contains three papers, part 2 contains two papers, and part 3 contains four papers. Each part concludes with a discussion section drawn from the discussion at the end of each conference presentation session.

The editors use the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations' definition of indigenous as a baseline. This definition places an emphasis on historical continuity of groups "for whom the preservation and transmission of their ancestral territories is essential to their continued existence as peoples" (p. ix). This definition works well for some North American groups, but is problematic for populations in the American Southeast: an area where people have moved or been removed from their land and have "hidden" their identity from the dominant popula-

tion that surrounds them in order to survive. However, for those groups discussed by the conference presenters it is a good working definition.

Each chapter is, like a presentation, self-contained. As a result, there is only superficial connection between the chapters–most are more or less case studies. A few address theoretical issues such as definitions of leadership and the multicultural state.

The negatives aside, for advanced students of indigenous peoples the volume has value that is not limited to North America. It places the indigenous population of North America on the same footing as other indigenous peoples, making it impossible for us to treat indigenous issues as if they are something of concern only in other parts of the world. Indigenous peoples in North America continue to exist, and indeed thrive, even in the face of ethnocidal actions on the part of Canadian, American, and Mexican governments.

The volume reminds the reader that Canada and the United States have a long history of treaty making with indigenous groups, while Mexico does not. Canadian and American indigenous groups define their relationship with their respective national governments in legal terms. The struggles for identity, political autonomy, economic development, and membership are fought in the courts. As L. James Dempsey points out in his paper, "Status Indian: Who Defines You," the Canadian government enacted legislation, Bill C-31, to correct a historic wrong in defining who was and who was not "Indian." An unintended consequence of the bill was that indigenous people felt that the government once again, had acted to define Indians without consulting the Indians. Several bands have challenged the bill in court, but the bill has polarized the indigenous community to such a degree that it no longer casts indigenous peoples against the state, but indigenous peoples against indigenous peoples. Bill C-31 is one part of the much greater issue of sovereignty in the United States and Canada.

Steven Crum's article on indigenous groups bisected by national borders looks at the issues of identity, indigenous rights, and national border integrity; a situation I am more accustomed to thinking about in relation to populations in Africa, India, and Southeast Asia. The inability to move freely across national borders impacts a group's ability to maintain traditional subsistence patterns, religious practices, and other aspects of their culture. Perhaps unintentionally, Crum also highlights some of the differences between issues at the southern and northern borders of the United States as they are played out in the lives of indigenous people. Each national government has its own policy concerning its indigenous population, but whereas there is similarity between the policies of the United States and Canada, the policies of Mexico appear quite different.

The lack of treaties between Indigenous groups and the Mexican government shifts the focus away from questions of sovereignty–a Canadian and U.S. issue–toward active autonomy and equal participation. The Zapatistas as shown by Sylvia Marcos and the Maya as shown June Nash are two groups who have fought, and are fighting, literally, the Mexican military for control over their territory, communities, education, and economic destiny. Large-scale, open conflict with the government results not only from national policies, but international policies as well. These chapters remind us that indigenous people in North America are not isolated from the influence of international and transnational policies of governments.

This is not a text I would use in an undergraduate class, although it is one I would recommend to a student interested in the relationship between indigenous people and modern nation-state. The style of this volume will not help its sales and it may get lost in the overwhelming number of academic texts available today. This would be most unfortunate. Each of the contributors to the volume is an outstanding representative of Native American studies and each has produced a chapter that, as a good conference paper should, stands on its own.

Both the conference and the book were ambitious. While the volume may fall short, it does not suffer from poor scholarship, but from the editors' desire to preserve the conference within these pages. The volume does succeed as a very necessary first step toward a study of indigenous people across the borders of North America.

Note

[1]. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 151.

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