



Alice Beck Kehoe. *America before the European Invasions*. New York: Longman, 2002. viii + 259 pp. \$20.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-41486-0.

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## Ethnohistorical Approach Addresses Field's "Myopic" Past

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Scholars and students of Native American history will not be surprised by Alice Beck Kehoe's assertions that traditional American histories have produced a "myopic" (p. 1) vision concerning the continent prior to 1600. Path-breaking works by Francis Jennings, Daniel Richter, Neal Salisbury, and Bruce Trigger, to name a few, have convincingly argued for Native American agency and not viewing European arrival from an Atlantic Coast perspective alone.

In a mere 252 pages of text, Kehoe provides an overview and summary analysis of the First Americans who crossed the Bering land bridge and the development of indigenous societies along the east and west coasts, the interior west and southwest, and Alaska. Framing them chronologically, Kehoe traces the early migrations of the First Americans from Asia 14,000 years ago through the early and middle woodland periods between 1000 BC and 400 AD, and finally to an overview of Native American societies at 1600.

Kehoe's systematic introduction of the problems regarding a history based on non-written sources, and how the combination of anthropological and archaeological discoveries (syntagm) or material culture with the interpretative model of historical research (paradigm) can address and solve these dilemmas, is very useful for students. While some instructor clarifications of Kehoe's explanations regarding schools of interpretation (Marxist, Whig, Postmodern, etc.) may be necessary for the students, her inclusion of these various theoretical approaches and their conflicting perspectives is important for students to consider. Her summary analyses at the end of each chapter also provide a conflict and consensus overview of the traditional and contemporary debates

over the discussed sections.

Within each section, Kehoe's inclusion of maps, illustrations, and photographs of settlements such as Cahokia, Poverty Point, Clovis, and others, allow readers to identify easily and distinguish these complex and vast regions. Additionally, she has incorporated both contemporary oral histories of creation stories, legends, poems, songs, and rituals and primary documents from Europeans. Accounts from John Smith and William Strachey of Virginia nicely parallel the Indian accounts; however Kehoe's failure to include similar documents from other English settlements in New England and the Middle Colonies, or narratives from French, Spanish, Dutch, and other European nations across the continent, contradicts her original claim that an Atlantic seaboard vision is far too limiting in envisioning American Indian societies. Although cultural persistence plays a minor role in the final pages of her work on encounters between Virginia and the Pamunkey Nation of Powhatan, Kehoe's reluctance to provide similar cultural encounter accounts across the continent limits the book's usefulness.

Despite this one major lapse, Kehoe has produced an important work that will find its place in undergraduate introductory and survey courses in American History, as well as in seminars in Historical Research and Methodology. Those interested in an introduction to ethnohistory and/or an ethnohistorical survey of pre-European America will find Kehoe's book very useful. Her knowledge and skill in correlating anthropological and archaeological data with historical interpretations is well documented in her various publications, and her current utilization of an ethnohistory paradigm in examining pre-European contact should find an audience weary of regular textbook analysis of a subject so complex and compelling.

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