

Frank W. Porter III, ed. *Strategies for Survival: American Indians in the Eastern United States.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986) 232 pp., \$35.00.

The subject of this book is several groups of Native Americans in the Eastern United States and their reactions to Euro-American intrusion. There are good introductory and concluding chapters which discuss the general situation of many of these groups, along with five case studies by various authors.

Several themes pervade the book. First, there is documentation that in many cases Native peoples have retained their sense of identity and structural and cultural characteristics which distinguish them both from Euro-Americans and black Americans over centuries of conquest, deprivation of land and other resources, and attempted enforced acculturation. As Leonard W. Doob puts it, this fact “shatters ‘the myth of the vanished Indian.’”

Marshall Becker’s typology and Porter’s analysis help us to understand hunting-gathering societies, even if many of these were also partly agricultural, when they were assaulted by societies organized differently. Confining such societies to specific plots of land inevitably disrupted their way of life. However, Becker notes that various Lenape bands reacted differently to this and other aspects of the changes forced upon them. The particular group he describes, the Okehocking Band, requested the establishment of a plot of land which they could own, and their request was granted. However, although the precise means by which this occurred are not entirely clear, the Band was still forced eventually to leave the lower Delaware River. Among the five cases studied, theirs was only temporarily a survival story.

In several cases, very small Native societies without recognition from the United States were able to survive at least partly because they retreated to marginal areas not strongly desired by Euro-Americans.

Another theme is the changing nature of federal government policy toward remnant bands of Eastern Indians who refused to move West during the period when federal policy was based on the notion of removing all Native Americans to locations beyond the Mississippi.

By the 1970s, there were over 400 Indian societies but only 290 were “recognized” by the federal government. Porter gives an excellent account of how this began to change in the 1970s. After studies and recommendations from the American Indian Policy Review Commission, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, beginning in 1978, established the “Federal Acknowledgement Project” by specifying criteria which Native American groups seeking recognition had to meet to allow them to petition for recognition. This is an ongoing process; at least one of the groups discussed in the book, the Gay Head Wampanoag, have achieved federal recognition since the book was published.

Another theme is the interplay of racial and cultural factors. Members

of many of the remnant societies intermarried with both black and white Americans, and their groups have been described by some people as "tri-racial societies." Especially in the South, and especially after the resurgence of racism there in the early part of this century, whites often lumped these peoples together with blacks as "colored"; with the introduction of widespread racial segregation by law, Indians found themselves assigned to black schools and other institutions. However, they felt strongly their own separate cultural identity, and established their own schools, churches and other institutions where they could.

The best account of the problems created by crude racism on the part of whites and of Indian reaction to such treatment is given by Helen C. Rountree in her chapter on various groups of Powhatan Indians in Virginia. This account makes it clear that racial discrimination strengthened the sense of cultural identity and the network of institutions, beginning with the family, which tied these societies together. The account of the Poospatuck by Ellice B. Gonzalez informs us that some of their white neighbors down to today regard these people as black, but that treatment on the basis of inaccurate stereotypes has strengthened their sense of identity as Indians.

Another theme is the complex interaction between sense of self-identification ("personal affiliation"), the network of social structures ("structural identity"), and cultural similarity. Even though the original language has died out and even though in many respects these peoples do not seem much different from their non-Indian neighbors, they still regard themselves as Indians and behave accordingly. But the survival of such identity also depends on the maintenance of at least some institutions of their own.

Finally, there is information about a recent resurgence of Indian identity and, especially, political organization among the groups being studied. Partly this is related to efforts from outside to assist them. In the 1920s anthropologist Frank G. Speck helped three Powhatan groups to incorporate under Virginia law. Since the 1970s, the Native American Rights Fund has assisted Eastern Indians to regain their legal status and rights, beginning with the very important case of the Passamaquoddy Indians of Maine.

There are several maps which are well done and helpful, but no illustrations. Each chapter has a good bibliography, and there is a helpful bibliographical essay at the end. An index is included.

Overall, this book is a useful addition to our understanding of contemporary Native Americans. It is good to have more information about survivors of the many Native American societies which populated North America before the 16th century who still proudly retain their Indian identity and live with links to their Native American ancestors. Inevitably, to know more about such Indians is also to know more about the dominant society.

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