

Indian Policies in the Americas: from Columbus to Collier and Beyond by William Y. Adams. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2014. 344 pp.

Beth R. Ritter

University of Nebraska, Omaha

William Adams has undertaken a comparative examination of the roots and legacies of “Indian” policy throughout the Americas since Columbus. Attempting this survey in 300 pages was very ambitious. Adams makes clear in his preface that this is a “study of the evolution of European and Euro American thought” (p. xi) and, moreover, that “the Indian voice will rarely be heard in these pages” (p. xii). Adams fulfills these promises and may find an audience with like-minded scholars.

Across space and time, Adams considers in some detail the reasons indigenous peoples were and are considered “inferior” (from religion to technology to sociopolitical organization) and liberally employs the terms *primitive* and *warlike* to describe his subjects. In a bizarre twist, he also lays out a scenario considering both the Ottoman and Chinese empires as potential colonizers of the Western Hemisphere. Consequently, this volume furthers the “Master Narrative” in that indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere are presented as rather passive observers in their own inevitable demise. Apparently, it was a foregone conclusion they would be conquered, assimilated, oppressed, dispossessed, enslaved, and condemned to untimely deaths—although more attention is paid to their potential value as labor (slaves and debt peonage) than to the demographic disasters following contact.

The book begins with the “Discovery of America” (p. 1) and is divided into four sections: “The Colonial Powers,” “Postcolonial Programs in Latin America and Canada,” “The United States Programs,” and “The Great Issues” (which restates many of the opinions

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and conclusions from previous sections). Readers who wish to fact-check or follow up on some of Adams's more provocative statements will find very few citations. For example, in Appendix B ("Notes on Sources"), Adams reveals he relied partially on encyclopedia articles (including *Encyclopedia Britannica*) for background material. The most robust sections of the book deal with US federal Indian policy, which are drawn heavily, though not always correctly, from Francis Paul Prucha (1976, 1978, and 1984).

Native North American scholars will detect many factual errors but will be particularly troubled by Adams's discussion of "wannabes" and the Red Power Movement. "Wannabes," according to Adams, include all self-identified Native Americans—ignoring the vagaries of federal acknowledgment policy and the tens of thousands who do not qualify for citizenship under their tribes' constitutions. Adams's notions about race, indigeneity, and identity are antiquated and will be offensive to many. He goes so far as to posit, "in the eastern United States, where there are not many 'real' Indians left, the wannabes have taken the lead in agitating for the protection of Indian sites and sacred places on public land" (p. 244). And then he goes even further:

Thanks to the influence of movies, television, and literature, pro-Indian sentiment is nearly as prevalent as is anti-Indian prejudice in Latin America. As a result, persons with only a modicum of Indian blood, and who have never been near a reservation, proudly proclaim themselves to be Indians. More than that, they and their numerous wannabe admirers unhesitatingly proclaim the moral superiority of the Indian race as a whole. In that sense, they are probably the most overt racists in North American today, yet, for the moment, they are condemned by nobody. [pp. 266–267]

Interestingly, Adams also considers John Collier a "racist" (p. 226). Discussing the Red Power Movement, Adams concludes, "no single piece of legislation or judicial decision can

be attributed in any direct way to the agitation of AIM, nor to the writings of Vine Deloria” (p. 243).

I will leave to others the task of evaluating the merits of the representations of “Indian” policy beyond North America; however, the majority of the book defaults to North America, and I am confident that federal Indian policy scholars will not be satisfied with Adams’s treatment of the subject nor with his discussion of Native American sovereignty and self-determination. For example, the author missed a great opportunity to further examine and apply the Marshall Trilogy, which would have provided a much stronger explanatory framework. Given the author’s acritical views on assimilation and acculturation, many will find his treatment of Indian Boarding schools (residential schools do not come up) and assimilation policy in general unsatisfactory.

Scholarly discourse depends on documenting and contextualizing opinions in thorough, transparent research. This book would have appealed to a wider audience with additional research and inclusion of more contemporary scholarship and paradigms. Undertaking a project with this scope in the 21st century without frankly acknowledging the legacies of genocide and ethnocide (i.e., United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [2007]) is unfathomable. Intentionally omitting and minimizing expressions of Native resistance (past and present) in favor of further elucidating “the European mind” was disappointing.

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