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**The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin: A Study of Three Centuries of Cultural Contact and Change.** By Felix M. Keesing. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society Memoir 10, 1939. 261 pp, Notes, Bibliography, Index, Illustrations, Maps. Reprinted, 1987, by the University of Wisconsin Press. \$11.95 Paper.

Rereading this classic after many years left me nostalgic, with a sense of great professional obligation. My sentiments were aroused for the time before *the Indian* had been converted into an academic's icon, when Indian studies were merely one part of a much larger undertaking—the intellectually tough, serious scholarly business of fashioning improved, systematic knowledge of the peoples of the world. Keesing's was an era now gone, with "linear history" now become a malediction, cheap accusations of "neo-colonialism" freely hurled at dedicated scientists, the wide-eyed recording of undigested oral history a fad, "Indians" of all shades and ambiguous antecedents breathlessly pursued for reasons that have little to do with the demanding, tedious labor of working through and improving on the forms of a scholarly paradigm.

Our collective debt to Keesing for this book is all the greater because his was essentially a graduate student exercise, pursued as part of his training in order to broaden his perspectives: his lasting research commitments were elsewhere, among the peoples of Polynesia, New Guinea, and the Philippines. Among his long list of brilliant works, *The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin* was his sole published contribution to understanding the native peoples of North America. Yet it had a lasting impact on, not only his own research among the Samoans, Orokaiva, Lepanto, and others, but on the theoretical and methodological directions of numerous anthropologists in many parts of the world. Moreover, the volume was finished a decade following his research, when Keesing could steal time away from his heavy duties at the University of Hawaii and the Institute of Pacific Relations. In assessing the importance of the book today we must keep this in mind. Neither as researcher using a direct historical approach to study cultural persistence and change among a group of Indians nor while writing did Keesing have available to him the extraordinary compilations of archival materials, the finding aids, the

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published and microfilm series, or the reference and secondary works which have appeared since. This fact, for instance, explains his rare factual lapse, the occasional thin spots, and the paucity of citations in this volume.

For many reasons and in numerous ways this study of Menomini culture contact and change was—and in substance it remains—a seminal, path-breaking model. To begin, this was truly an interdisciplinary undertaking, in the sense of being a product of the joint efforts of Felix—the anthropologist, and Marie Margaret Keesing—the trained historian, whose hand is evident on many pages. It was, also, one of the first properly ethno-historical studies of any society in the world. Ethno-history's long anthropological tap root is here manifested, for Keesing's thinking and approach in 1929 was firmly grounded in the then dominant American historicalism and diffusionism. His improvements on older methods are of several kinds, especially his heavy use of such primary sources (documentary and iconographic) as were then available, but also his disciplined, nicely focused field observation and his deliberate collection of oral history data, his use of museum collections of art and artifacts, and his use of secondary sources to fit the Menominis' experiences into a larger, continental framework of sociopolitical and environmental change.

It is the critical, disciplined use of such varied raw materials which catches one's attention; and Keesing's success at extracting from such a disparate corpus of fragments a thickly analyzed monographic whole; and the lasting merits of a genuinely liberal education. The latter is a particularly noteworthy point in an era of overly specialized undergraduate and graduate training, when young anthropologists writing about the past of Indians do not bother to learn who the Whigs were or what they were about, while historians generally remain utterly naive about Indian languages as well as the nature of language.

Another striking feature of this study is the skeptical eye Fee Keesing cast on all his sources. Not one to apply a double standard of interpretation, he notes major biases in government documents, which he observes concentrate on ethnocentric judgments about Indian "progress" or lack of same. But, researching and writing before an ethos of condescension enveloped such research encounters, he does not pretend that every oral account

from an alleged "Indian" represents a gospel truth, and recognized the retrospectively distorted, often self-serving, situationally determined biases in such recollections. Nor did he let museum collectors off the critical hook, noting that such materials commonly stress the spectacular, and are too often poorly or incorrectly documented as to origins, use, and meaning. Nonetheless, Keesing set out to penetrate all such distortions and did so with significant, lasting results. These, at least so far as Menomini ethnohistory is concerned, have yet to be improved on, except in detail about topics dealing with events following Keesing's untimely death.

Unlike others of his generation Keesing did not set out to reconstruct a "memory ethnography," leaving a false impression of pristine prehistoric or early historic stasis. He did not write in the "ethnographic present," and any novice reading his words today will acquire a solid sense of the moving disequilibrium which has been the Menomini cultural experience. Drawing from while improving on the historicalist and diffusionist thinking of his time, the book reads rather like an early, dynamic application of the *Outline of Cultural Materials*, as he tracks processes of persistence and change across time in numerous aspects of Menomini culture and social life. If, today, a reviewer finds any surprising theoretical absences, it is the lack of any explicit structural-functional thinking in his final report. This model was in its infancy when Keesing did his research, but was in full flower before he finished the book, and he was fully conversant with its approaches, as his subsequent studies reveal. Nonetheless, the causal and functional interrelatedness of developments in aspects of Menomini life are matters to which he gave systematic, productive attention, for this study is, above all else, an exercise in holism, with substantial consideration paid many factors—environmental, political, technological, cultural, and otherwise.

Keesing's style of reporting his conclusions, with chapters detailing the particular events of a historical era alternating with others' drawing out interpretations and conclusions about stability and change, remains a standard for most anthropologists in similar studies. Many historians, in contrast, are uncomfortable with this fashion of reporting, since it interrupts the narrative flow, their particularizing account of events. The difference in style is disciplinary, since for Keesing and other anthropologists ethno-

history is a method, a means of reaching conclusions about cultural change and persistence, an idiographic means to nomothetic ends, a tactic informed and guided by general theory, not an end in its own right.

One glimpse of Fee Keesing's genius is seen in his early recognition that, in the present, the "historical process of change itself appears . . . spread out in living personalities" (p. 1). This powerful insight was subsequently refined by Robert Redfield with his folk-urban continuum, Pete Hallowell in his Ojibwa studies, and applied to the Menomini themselves in a strongly ahistorical, behavioral science mode, by George and Louise Spindler. However, unlike these and other scholars working in a scientific, synchronic fashion, Keesing never lost sight of the particular events and the processes of history. For example, he wrote long before systemic knowledge about ethnic identity, especially elective identity, was developed. Nonetheless, he understood and fully documented—modern Menomini cultural fictions and dichotomized American racial thinking notwithstanding—that the contemporary Menomini community and "culture" represents a historically derived emergent, a biological, linguistic, social, and cultural hodgepodge. Indeed, Ned Spicer, Fredrik Barth, and Yehudi Cohen would have appreciated Keesing's showing that (especially since the second half of the 19th-Century) this ethnic group was multiple in its antecedents and fluctuating in composition, with economic and political factors being the major determinants of the process of ethnic boundary construction and ethnic identity transmutations.

Indeed, numerous other scholars owe large debts to Keesing's pioneering work. Much of the subsequent development of acculturation thinking is foreshadowed in this study. Helen Codere, Ed Bruner, Evon Vogt, among others, who followed the pattern of reporting contact history and change processes in terms of periods associated with significant variables and types of contact communities, were following a trail opened by Fee Keesing. And, putting the lie to those "anti-colonialists" who insist on believing that acculturation studies were exclusively concerned with what powerful White Men did to powerless Natives and that their main assumption was that culture contact inevitably led to assimilation into the "dominant" culture, Keesing was among the many who regularly examined the significance and effects of other types of contact relationships, between the Menomini and

individual French males, for instance, as well as with other native peoples, and to demonstrate that "stabilized pluralism" is one alternative outcome.

The many strong interpretations and hypothetical formulations which Keesing wrote into this book, most of which have stood the test of later in-depth studies, are too numerous to recount. He concluded, for instance, that the "traditional" practice of maple-sugar extraction and the Midewiwin (the Grand Medicine Society), were post-French contact emergents, hypotheses later reinforced by the work of Carol Mason and Hal Hickerson, respectively. Similarly, he foreshadowed Hickerson and others' work on the decline of kin-based community organization and the emergence of the fur-trade era, territorially based hunting task group, as well as that of Charles Callender on the demise of Central Algonquian clan systems, Jeanne Kay's studies of Wisconsin Indian lead-mining and environmental adaptations, and Tom Sasaki and Harry Basehart's study of the role of returning war veterans.

If there are weaknesses in this book, even judged against the intellectual resources of its time, they lay in Keesing's manifest decision to stay with dichotomized "Indian" versus "White" (i.e., conventional Euro-American) racial constructs, and in his analysis of the changing patterns of Menomini social structure. The former is difficult to understand, for Keesing wrote in a day when the pretense that "Indian" and "White" represent immutable natural categories was not a highly politicized issue, making inquiry into such matters taboo; he worked in an era when such an admission would not have brought the risk of being throttled by the denizens of Indian studies institutes; and he understood perfectly to the contrary, as he showed in page after page of documentation and interpretations concerning the multiple antecedents of the emerging Menomini reservation community. Similarly, as regards social organization, despite his array of facts and partial interpretations, he did not draw out the explicit conclusion that this community, while often earlier informally managed by powerful "chiefs" of French origin, during the latter 1800s became a class-stratified organization dominated by an elite of largely non-Menomini, non-Indian antecedents.

Felix M. Keesing's important contributions to modern anthropological thinking have been too long overlooked, as has his

large, still valuable gift to the development of knowledge about the peoples of North America, even if his *Memomimi Indians of Wisconsin* was a one-off, parenthetical to the main thrust of his career in Oceania. Hence the University of Wisconsin Press has done scholars, students, and the general reading public a considerable service by reissuing this too long out-of-print classic.

Whether the Press has done anyone a service in its selection of an author of the "Foreword" and the backcover blurb is a different matter. In both we find repeated the banalities that the Menomini were of a "peaceful nature," their names rarely recorded in "white military annals," long-time dwellers of the forests. Certainly the Press's editor, or the author who repeated these antiquated stereotypes, might at least have read the book they were celebrating by re-publication. Even in 1929 Fee Keesing knew better, for he fully demonstrated that the ancestral Menomini were regularly, heavily, and eagerly involved in the combat actions of the Beaver wars, the Fox Wars, the French and Indian Wars, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and—on a particularly large scale—in the Civil War, when no raiding or defending against their own Indian rivals, near and distant. Indeed, Keesing's informants glibly explained their enthusiastic participation in the Black Hawk War as having persuaded Americans to support them in a vengeance-seeking assault on their old Sauk enemies, and that open minded scholar explicitly addresses the origins of the "peaceful Menomini" fiction (it dates to the late 19th-century).

As to the "Menominis" being ancient devotees of life in the deep woods, as Keesing shows in rich detail, from prehistory through the mid-1800s they remained a lacustrine-riverine people. Not until well after they settled on their present reservation, after the establishment of a pine timber industry, the development of a road network, and the sharp decline of resources in their wet lands, did the bulk of the population move into the forests. This economic-ecological transformation, only one of several to mark Menomini history, as Keesing shows, was caused by environmental degradation in a limited land-base, and American economic development programs. At that time the local history myths of the Menomini past also began developing among Americans, as well as some cooperative Menomini. Readers of this marvelous book will find such legends and popular images

countered and corrected by richly detailed fact, thick description, and penetrating interpretations. It is a must read, for anyone interested in particular, and for the few specialists concerned with the growth of anthropological ideas.

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**Massacre on the Gila: An Account of the Last Major Battle Between American Indians, With Reflections on the Origin of War.** By Clifton B. Kroeber and Bernard L. Fontana. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986. 232 pp. \$26.50 Cloth.

If one were to judge this book by its main title it would appear to be an ethnohistorical study of a particular battle between Indian tribes, perhaps of interest only to the Southwestern specialist. It is, however, the last line of the sub-title, "with Reflections on the Origin of War," that somewhat inconspicuously announces the much loftier intentions of the authors. As for the main title, the authors in fact seem almost apologetic for what they call, "an exercise in historical and anthropological sleuthing" and imply that such provincial focus is no more than "parochial antiquarianism (p. 148)."

Although as an anthropologist who has some pretensions at being a scientist I have no quarrel with any researcher who is interested in ultimate explanations, as a Southwestern specialist I am not totally convinced that everything we do must immediately be related to "larger" theoretical issues. Therefore both concerns in the study are of considerable significance.

In fact as the title implies, most of this work focuses on Southwest Indian warfare, and especially a single battle between Yumans from the lower Colorado area (primarily Mohaves and Quechans) and the amalgam of Yuman speaking tribes that have come to be known as the Maricopa along with their Pima allies who lived on the Gila.

The battle is distinctive for a number of reasons. These include its being the last all Indian engagement in the Southwest that we know anything about, along with the fact that we have both native (representing both sides in the conflict) and non-native observations and accounts of the battle. Some of these accounts