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The Voice of Dawn: An Autohistory of the Abenaki Nation. By Frederick Matthew Wiseman

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ingly inexplicable and unnecessary suffering for a variety of Americans—Indians, whites, African Americans, and persons of mixed ancestry. (p. 204)

It is in these final pages that the author's motivations for writing the work become clear. Monnett's plea for a common historical unity is well intended, but ignores the contextual realities of the event. The forced removal of the Northern Cheyennes and their embattled journey home occurred as part of the national expansionism of the United States. Native Americans, including the Northern Cheyennes, were viewed as a racially inferior people who were an impediment to that process. If there is a unifying trajectory that binds us all, it is this historical reality, not apologies or hollow pleas to comprehend each other's perspectives on a singular historical event.

As a history, *Tell Them We Are Going Home* is thoroughly documented and meticulously researched, especially in describing the Northern Cheyenne's flight north. The book is a valuable addition, not because it contributes any new insights, but because it draws together a mass of literature. It is the book's synthetic nature that makes it a contribution.

*Gregory R. Campbell*  
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**The Voice of Dawn: An Autohistory of the Abenaki Nation.** By Frederick Matthew Wiseman. Hanover: University of New England Press, 2001. 220 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

This unique book combines scholarly research and the rich personal history of the Alnobak or Abenaki people. The author, Frederick Wiseman, draws upon his own memoirs, filled with oral traditions and the personal knowledge that comes with being one of the people, along with photographic archives and his academic training in archaeology to uncover Abenaki history. His book also draws upon the well-respected secondary sources on the Abenaki of Colin Calloway, William Haviland, and the late Gordon Day.

At times Wiseman walks a tight rope between scholars and himself, and between competing factions in the contemporary Abenaki communities. He recognizes his occasional precarious positions but he also seems to welcome the challenge of creating a history that repatriates the past to his people. Repatriation is, in fact, a major theme of his book. As he states in the first chapter, repatriation means more than returning sacred archaeological materials to the people. Repatriation also means repossessing one's paleoenvironmental and ethnohistorical information and ideas. In sum, repatriation calls for taking back the past, making it more accessible to the people themselves and refiguring it—not in terms of white or Iroquoian hegemony, but in terms of the Abenaki perspective that for so long has been neglected.

*The Voice of the Dawn* spans the earliest recorded archaeological data about the Abenaki to the present-day factionalism within the tribe. Wiseman always

incorporates oral traditions with archaeology. For example, the discussion of the Paleo-Indian cultural time period is prefaced with the story about “Koluscap and the Frost People” (pp. 13–14). The Frost People, of course, are the glaciers that created so much of the landscape of New England. Likewise, a later chapter deals with the coming of the Anglos and the war over the beaver trade. This story, “The Departure of Koluscap” (pp. 71–72), describes a man who becomes saddened by the conflicts that embroil his people and their preoccupation with trade for European goods.

Photographs and illustrations are displayed throughout the book. Some of the photos show contemporary Abenaki modeling clothes and technologies from Abenaki history, like the photo of the Paleo-Indian hunter (p. 22). Maps, pictures of ceramics, birch-bark canoes, projectile points, and the like are all carefully placed to complement the text. Wiseman pays particular attention to technology and his book reads like the textual guide to Keith Wilbur’s research on the material culture of the New England Indians. Wiseman admits that he has taken some liberties in reconstructing past Abenaki lifeways.

One of Wiseman’s more controversial statements concerns the relationship of the Iroquois to the Abenaki. He argues that the “Iroquois ‘R’ Us” and bases some of his conjecture on ceramic styles. Rather than agreeing with the popular argument that the St. Lawrence Iroquoian ceramics show the colonization of Abenaki country from the St. Lawrence Valley, he sees the distinctive, collared ceramic style as a blending of Abenaki and Iroquoian cultures. He believes that the two groups shared many features and learned from each other as the centuries passed. He uses comparative data from the Southwest, where he did his original training in archaeology, to show why the migration theory assumptions might be too farfetched, especially in light of convincing ethnohistorical data.

The book ends with a picture of contemporary Abenaki life. Wiseman painfully details the political struggles of the tribe from the 1970s to 1999. The tribe has become divided over who has the authority to make decisions, who is a real Indian, and where the tribe goes from here. Likewise, the state of Vermont seemed to waffle over these same issues plus the all-important designation of recognition and political sovereignty. Wiseman notes many bright spots on the horizon. The tribe has been coming together more often to host cultural events and they are reaching out to other tribes in the United States and Canada in recognition of the struggles they must fight together.

*The Voice of the Dawn* makes a solid contribution to New England Native American studies, primarily because Wiseman draws from so many sources, including his own ethnicity, to help write the story of the Alnobak. The author has included a lengthy bibliography with detailed source notes, along with appendices concerning place names, herbal medicines, and educational resources.

Where Wiseman may be faulted is in his use of conjecture to fill in gaps about the past. He tries to make the best assumption based upon the occasional skimpy data at hand. The Iroquois ceramics are one case in point. Another issue concerns citations—Wiseman does not use in-source citations

to reference his sources. Rather, the reader must flip to the lengthy source notes at the back of the book to identify where he got his information.

*Laurie Weinstein*

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**Weaving the Dance: Navajo Yeibichai Textiles (1910–1950).** By Rebecca M. Valette and Jean-Paul Valette. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000. 72 pages. \$19.95 paper.

This exhibition catalog/book attempts to provide information on figures woven into Navajo textiles between 1910 and 1950. Many of the textiles are presented for public viewing for the first time in this work. Each figure presented is in need of cultural analysis to give appropriate perspective and legitimacy.

This book is certainly one of a handful that continues to document work on warp and weft count. There is a desperate need to fold in more accurate cultural information, which is generally missing in books about “Other” cultures. In that sense, *Weaving the Dance* is in need of many clarifications and explanations. As with any book not authored by a member of the community, it leaves many questions unanswered and/or perpetuates misinformation.

The key problem in need of explanation is the difference between *Yei* and *Yeibichai*. The *Yeis* presented in this literature are the woven figures, which serve as symbolic representations of the Holy People. They are not *the* Holy People, however. Within Navajo culture, it is considered impossible to actually depict the Holy People. For clarity, *Yeibichai* are the Holy People’s maternal grandchildren. As mentioned in the book, Navajo men impersonate the *Yeis* as *Yeibichai* dancers. The root word *-chai* is the Navajo term used to address a maternal grandfather or the way an older person may address a specific clan-related maternal male grandchild.

In Nightway Ceremony, Navajo males are representatives of the Holy People (*Yei*). Not just any Navajo man can become a *Yeibichai*, however. One has to be called to it by the Holy People and it requires a lengthy initiation process. In the ceremonies, these men are elevated above the human status they occupy when they are not participating in winter ceremonies. They are treated differently, and thus are not called by their birth (Navajo name) or individual given (English) names. For example, a woman whose spouse is a *Yeibichai* dancer does not address him as her spouse, but as her grandfather.

Since religion is generally understood to be a male domain in various cultures around the world, only Navajo men were permitted to participate in Navajo ceremonies. This was true into the early part of the twentieth century. Women were not permitted to participate in any part of a Navajo ceremony since they have natural power (menstruation) that would disrupt a ceremony. They were not considered to be dangerous or evil (p. 28). It is still thought that their natural power would supersede manmade power (religion). Women were not active participates in Nightway and other Navajo cere-