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The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of American Indians in the Old South. By J. Leitch Wright, Jr.

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picture of the "fiscal confusion" in the Audiencia of Mexico that forced reforms in the colonial administration.

The second essay updates the debate concerning pre- versus post-Conquest nutritional levels in central Mexico. After reviewing general patterns of Indian food production and consumption, Cook and Borah calculate the probable metabolic needs of farmers and unskilled laborers who constituted the bulk of the Native population. Food intake for this group during the period immediately before the Conquest is judged to have been chronically inadequate considering the physical demands of manual labor. The nutritional deficit was somewhat ameliorated by the introduction of new technologies and food crops from Europe. Even the European ration standards for those who worked as virtual slaves was above that provided the Aztec *macehual* or commoner. Ironically, the 97 percent decline in Native population during the first century of the colonial period may have increased per capita income because of the availability of more good agricultural land and the competition for scarce Indian labor.

The last chapter is a *tour de force* in the application of historical methods. The thorough analysis by Cook and Borah of the vital registers of eight northern California missions reveals a great deal about population dynamics in multi-ethnic frontier communities and suggests a number of important questions that deserve further research.

The work completes a monumental three volume series containing eighteen essays on population history by Cook and Borah. Their collaboration constitutes an essential part of the scholarship on the demographic consequences of European colonization in the Americas.

*Timothy Dunnigan*  
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**The Only Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of American Indians in the Old South.** By J. Leitch Wright, Jr. New York: Free Press, 1981. 372 pp. cloth. \$16.95

Professor Wright has produced an excellent one-volume survey of aboriginal presence in the United States South. It is a well-

written view of the tides of change that flowed over the Indian peoples in the region as successive colonizers left their imprint on the land and the inhabitants, from Spanish discovery to the American Revolution, with spillage into the Andrew Jackson period.

The work demonstrates the author's long research in the field and his familiarity with archival materials in Spain, Mexico, England, Canada and the United States, as well as a wealth of printed sources. Not only is Wright familiar with the most recent historical scholarship, but he has tapped anthropology and archaeology in the latest techniques of ethnohistory. The author of four books, Wright is a Southerner by birth who teaches at Florida State University and his writing demonstrates the facile knowledge of one from the region.

In spite of his efforts, much of the story of long-vanished Indians of the South remains shrouded in time. Out of the mysterious void of unremembered Native movements, dislocations, triumphs and tragedies have come few extant sources. The individuals and the tribes move like shadows across the historical landscape. Wright does a good job of speculating, using oral tradition, slave narratives, conjecture and surmise.

Among the most difficult tasks for the ethnohistorian is the estimate of aboriginal population. Wright follows the lead of Cook, Borah and Dobyns in adhering to a high Native population density in the South—and of necessity, a staggering loss of Indian lives in the face of European and African-born diseases. The author perceives a high Native population for such historical centers as the capitals of Cofitachiqui, Apalachee, in Mabila, and for the Powhatan Confederacy. Wright is not as exact in the area of the impact of diseases as he is in his original demographic count. He does hypothesize as best he can on the original numbers and the levels of survivors over time for given communities.

The jacket blurb states that this is "the first full account" of Southern Indians. The attempt falls short of the goal. Lack of sources prevent any account from succeeding. However, for a single volume survey, this work is as close to fulfilling that goal as any recent work is likely to get. The volume also reflects the latest in Indian historiography and details the events surrounding countless Native peoples with moral neutrality. The volume's breadth and information supplant Verner Crane and Wesley Craven.



An often anecdotal account, the work is well written. The maze of wars, enslavements, diseases and religious assaults upon the Natives are handled briefly but well. Without dripping emotion Wright details the various removals of Southern Indians from the only land they knew. The events flow naturally and the narrative both excites and informs at the same time. The book was an alternate selection of the History Book Club last year.

A one-volume treatment of so vast a subject has some errors. The demographics are speculative because of the lack of sources. The one-volume discussion abbreviates aboriginal religiophilosophical concepts and contributions to the European-American world. The tribal discussions are shortened. There is some repetition, as for instance in the twice mentioned Starving Time at Jamestown (pp. 12 and 67) or the torture of Nairne (pp. 123 and 194). A map that identified the Westos and a map that plotted the movements of the several tribes mentioned on page 124 of the text would have enhanced the reader's comprehension of the bewildering array of groupings and their travels. Although the author dwells on the role of Africans in the South, oddly he makes no reference to the work of Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., on the interaction of Africans and Indians in the South. The National Congress of American Indians is misidentified (p. 249).

The work raises challenging speculations. He fancies some ten thousand shipwrecked European sailors who survived and comingled with Southern Natives. He leaves to the reader's imagination the long-time biotic impact of those survivors. He underscores as none before him in recent historical literature the role Southern Indians and Whites played in the formation of the heritage of the American Negro (p. 262). He speculates that Indian matrilineal society led to prominent role functions for the Negro slave mother and provides convincing evidence for the Indian origin of Black soul food and Br'er Rabbit tales. Wright even leads to the reader to imagine the heights to which Southern Indians may have risen had they remained biologically isolated.

The book offers major correctives to our thinking on the earliest European contacts with Native peoples in the South. Wright pushes the first contacts backward in time from the Roanoke Island colony to the scattered contacts a half-century before that. Throughout the book the author keeps before the reader the insatiable European demand for Indian slaves and the demo-

graphic impact of the enslavement of "tens of thousands of Southern Indians," (p. 148) many of whom were shipped to the West Indies. He sees the destruction of the Apalachee area of Northwest Florida in 1704-1713 as the greatest of the American slave raids, netting some 4,000 Indian slaves.

*The Only Land They Knew* is a fine history of the contributions of American Indians and Indian-White relations in the American South. The book takes the reader into the villages, into the midst of the battles, and into the slaving expeditions, with a final reminder that there are today pockets of Indians surviving within the land that the Natives know.

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**The American Indians.** By Edward H. Spicer. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982. 210 pp. paper. \$5.95

Originally published as an essay in the *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (1980), "The American Indians" has been released in softcover as part of the Dimensions of Ethnicity Series, edited by Stephen Thernstrom. The purpose of the master encyclopedia and subsequent reprints of major essays is twofold. First, in response to the voluminous literature generated over the past twenty years on the complex mosaic formed by more than one hundred ethnic groups in American history, editor Thernstrom commissioned comprehensive essays on the major ethnic groups. In addition, twenty-nine thematic essays—all providing substance to Thernstrom's belief that ethnicity is the central theme of American history—supply the researcher with authoritative, up-to-date syntheses of current work in the field. A second function of the project was to ferret out subgroups within the larger ethnic units. In the case of the "American Indians" the reader should not be surprised to find discussions of some 173 Peoples, labeled American Indians by Euroamericans since 1492 but as different from one another as Europeans are.

The choice of Edward H. Spicer as the author of the section on American Indians was a master stroke. Long respected for his anthropological and ethnohistorical studies of North Amer-