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Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources. By M. Kat Anderson.

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Wabenakis were the provisional winners—despite having absorbed their own harsh blows, they managed to drive most colonists out of the area, at least temporarily. Colonists in southern New England reveled in having broken the Narragansetts, Nipmucs, and Wampanoags, but they did so at the cost of steep losses in life and treasure and, ultimately, an end to the Puritan elite's stranglehold on power. Boston's bungling of the war, subsequent factionalism, crackdown on dissidents, and refusal to seek England's support during the fighting convinced the crown once and for all that it was time to assert its control. During the 1680s and 1690s, Whitehall forced Massachusetts to tolerate Anglicans and Baptists and cease capital punishment of Quakers, revoked the Massachusetts charter and replaced the elected governor with a crown appointee, and established New Hampshire as a separate royal colony. Some colonists welcomed these reforms, but the old-line majority experienced these changes as a withdrawal of God's favor. Their sense of crisis found its most graphic expression in the Salem witchcraft trials, an event in which Puritan villagers, a number of them refugees from Wabenaki attacks, hanged churchgoing grandmothers who had supposedly covenanted with the Devil in the shape of an Indian.

"Did ever friends deal so with friends?" This question, asked by Miantonomi to remind Massachusetts of its reciprocal obligations to the Narragansetts, was echoed over and over again by Indians and the English throughout the seventeenth century in response to the Bay Colony's power grabs. Perhaps only the shared threat of a society as self-righteous and domineering as Massachusetts could have produced this common voice among people divided along so many fault lines. Because Pulsipher has pulled together the unruly strands of this story in such a compelling fashion, we are likely to ponder the sachem's haunting question for some time to come.

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**Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources.** By M. Kat Anderson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. 526 pages. \$39.95 cloth.

This volume represents the culmination of a huge undertaking, a long-term project that also produced an MA thesis (1988) and a PhD dissertation (1993). The book's bibliography alone takes up sixty pages. As the dust jacket proclaims, the book is an "examination of the extensive knowledge Native Americans brought to bear in managing California's natural resources and the imprint this management left on the state's landscape." Its thesis is that California was not a natural wilderness at the time of first contact, as it has been misinterpreted to be, but rather an enormous garden, tended in what Anderson regards as beneficial and sustainable ways by the Indian population, and that modern Americans should reinstate similar practices in place of hands-off policies of land management.

Anderson's personality, as it emerges from her writing, may put off a number of readers. She casts barbs like a political outsider at those in power, in this case anthropologists and conservationists. Two of the things she doesn't like about anthropologists are their classification of the California tribes based on linguistic criteria and their imposition of certain tribal names. Oddly, she employs these very names in her presentation, using "Pit River (Achumawi)," for example. In a volume that cries out for maps, Anderson provides but two specific to California—and then faults them rather than drawing and labeling the tribal areas to her preferred specifications.

She disapproves of conservationists such as John Muir for advocating hands-off treatment of wilderness areas. The notion that "the hand of man generally improves a landscape" has been around among Euro-Americans since the mid-nineteenth century. Anderson opts for this anthropocentric view of what is good. Her evaluation of the condition of California at contact begins and ends with the conclusion that it was good because it was productive of things needed by the early Indians and was aesthetically pleasing to the early newcomers. The book's major premise—that precontact California was a cornucopia—is in direct contrast to the view of one of her sources, who attributes the vast aboriginal knowledge of plants to experimentation during times of scarcity and hunger (Stephen Powers, *Tribes of California*, 1877, 419). Anderson disdains untended wilderness because it reduces the capacity of the land to satisfy certain human wants. While it is easy to agree with her that humanity is part of nature, whether nature exists to satisfy the needs of people is another question. She glosses over the fact that human management can have deleterious effects.

Relative to the proportion of text devoted to plants, Anderson says little about the fauna of California, except to note that the megafauna did not fare so well under the management of the Indians, blaming them in some measure for the Pleistocene extinction of the large animals. She attributes aspects of their decline to overharvesting but fails to consider that the horticultural practices of the Indians might have had the effect of disfavoring plant and animal life and water-flow patterns necessary to sustaining the big animals.

Anderson claims that the Indians of California displayed "true heterogeneity," in opposition to anthropologists who have combined the various groups by language affiliation and cultural area (34). While anthropologists believe the state boundaries to be artificial constructs that ignore cultural traits and have excluded certain peoples and their traditional lands from what is called the California culture area, Anderson goes in a different direction entirely. Countering her own claim about heterogeneity, she treats California Indians as homogeneous groups in a protoagricultural state, ascribing pretty much the same management techniques to all of them: "The Indians of California did not just gather plants from the landscape; they tended, manipulated, and cared for these plants in ways that came to resemble the cultivation of domesticated plants in agricultural societies" (249–50). While blaming anthropologists for creating some of the prejudices against the Indians of California by using "inaccurate labels" such as *hunters and gatherers* for them (2), she applies the label *gatherers and hunters* to them herself.

But the Indians of precontact California were not homogeneous. Anderson has a bias toward the Sierra region of the state, where she conducted the bulk of her research. Her plant food pyramid for all the Indians of the state, for example, appears to project the consumption of seeds and grains at 55 percent, buried plant parts at 25 percent, leaves and stems at 15 percent, and fruits at 5 percent. She only briefly acknowledges, but does not go into, the fact that several tribes of the Colorado River and Imperial Valley (namely the Yuma, Halchidhoma, Mohave, and Kamia) had developed full-blown agriculture under influences from the Southwest and Mexico. Unfortunately, a discussion of their land management techniques is not developed because their practices fall outside Anderson's general thesis. The Yuma of the Colorado River, for example, differed markedly from Anderson's model in that they relied on agricultural crops (e.g., maize, beans, and squashes) for 40 percent of their total diet while wild plants (e.g., acorns, seeds, and greens) made up 35 percent (Robert F. Heizer and Albert B. Elsasser, *The Natural World of the California Indians*, 1980, 83).

Anderson establishes a common California culture but it is based on overgeneralizations. She has a habit of depicting an uncommon practice as common and then citing the few practicing groups as mere examples rather than the exceptions. In one case, she erroneously claims that "California Indians frequently named their children after a plant or animal" as supporting data for a claim that they did not overharvest either plants or animals because they correctly saw themselves as a part of nature (58). In another case, she says that irrigation was a precontact practice, used by such groups as the Owens Valley Paiute. This contrasts with the claim by others that the Paiute's artificial irrigation was novel and "one of the few independent inventions of an agricultural technique in North America" (Heizer and Elsasser, 52).

Anderson's book would have benefited from a briefer, more focused presentation. The sixty-page introductory history of the appropriation of Indian land by successive groups of Euro-Americans and the accompanying reduction of the Indian population is interesting to read, but great portions of it are irrelevant to the development of Anderson's thesis. The lack of appropriate organization is the book's great weakness. Chapters that examine traditional methods of caring for the land and how the landscapes were altered are followed by a seemingly endless repetition of the same material with reference to the topics of basketry, other items of material culture, and all the food plants. The principal chapters should have centered on land management and included detailed and crosscutting discussions covering topics such as burning, irrigating, sowing, tilling, transplanting, incomplete harvesting, plant domestication, and pruning and coppicing. And since more than half of the work would have needed to address the practice of burning, a title almost as suitable for the volume would be *Burning the Wild*.

One subject worthy of further research is whether American Indians distinguished between managed and wild lands. Anderson thinks not. Her evidence is the absence of words for *wilderness* in many of the languages and the complete absence of words for *civilization*. She also provides a citation that an awareness of the distinction occurs only after hunters and gatherers

progress to farming and herding. However, an examination of the Salishan languages of Washington, British Columbia, Idaho, and Montana shows that these terms are unnecessary to make such a distinction. Words equivalent to *garden* were applied to plots where individuals managed plant resources and thereby asserted some claim to harvest ownership, in contrast to those areas where such names could not be applied (Nile Robert Thompson and C. Dale Sloat, "The Growth of Salishan 'Gardens,'" pt. 1, "Interior Salish," University of British Columbia Working Papers in Linguistics 14, 2004). One would expect to find words distinguishing tended from untended areas among not only the agricultural Yuman tribes but also the tribes with protoagriculture, such as the Hupa, who appear to have made distinctions of ownership based upon whether a resource was altered or not (cf. Arnold R. Pilling, *Yurok: Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, *California*, 1978, 147).

If California indeed was a good place to live for three hundred thousand Indians in precontact times, that state of affairs would seem to us to say little about how to make it a good place for forty-five million people to live now. The principal technique for dealing with wild areas proposed by Anderson is controlled burning, which has been practiced in modern times to manage both wild and cultivated lands with varying success. For a look at the many problems *caused* by burning, Anderson might want to consider the annual burning of grass-seed fields in the Willamette Valley of the neighboring state of Oregon. Since the land management techniques used by the Indians of California are essentially the same as those well-documented ones practiced by Indians all over the Far West and other parts of North America (and ones allowed by Anderson to be nearly universal among human societies), the best feature of *Tending the Wild* is the specific information she provides about plants used in alimentary or cultural ways by the indigenous people of California. The argument about whether protecting certain areas of the planet from cultivation is a good idea or not will certainly not be settled by this book.

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**Three Nations, One Place: A Comparative Ethnohistory of Social Change among the Comanches and Hasinai during Spain's Colonial Era, 1689–1821.** By Martha McCollough. New York: Routledge, 2004. 140 pages. \$75.00 cloth.

The two indigenous nations discussed in *Three Nations, One Place* are the nomadic, bison-hunting Comanches of the Plains and the sedentary, horticulturalist Hasinai of eastern Texas. The third nation, Spain, was one of the colonial powers whose presence spurred social change in the region. The "place" is actually "an area extending from the Arkansas River east to the Mississippi River, south to the Gulf of Mexico, and west to the upper Rio