
*Native Foodways* is ‘the first scholarly edited volume exclusively devoted to the interplay between Indigenous North American religious traditions and foodways’ (p. 1). Dedicated to ethnographer and religion scholar Inés Talamantez, with eight chapters written by her former students, the book emerged from two years of panels focused on North American indigenous foodways in the Native Traditions of the Americas Unit of the American Academy of Religion. Edited by the late Michelene E. Pesantubbee (author of *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast*, University of New Mexico Press, 2005) and Michael J. Zogry (author of *Anetso, the Cherokee Ball Game: At the Center of Ceremony and Identity*, University of North Carolina Press, 2010), the volume is bookended with an introduction by Zogry and a brief epilogue by Pesantubbee.

In the introduction, Zogry notes that anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell’s ‘other-than-human persons’ (p. 3) category is employed by many contributors in the volume, suggesting the viability of the category in a broader comparative perspective. Crucially, Zogry argues that indigenous North American concepts of non-human persons ‘are *not* elements of a romanticized Disneyesque fantasy...They deserve to be taken seriously’ (p. 4). In taking indigenous relationships with non-human persons seriously, the volume’s contributors ‘treat as authentic the cultural products of Indigenous communities, and accord them the same veracity as archaeological evidence and written evidence arranged in a linear chronology’ (p. 6–7). Zogry’s introduction includes a brief cultural history of corn – from early colonial fears of eating Indian food at Jamestown and Plymouth, through Benjamin Franklin’s valorization of corn, to the subsequent settler-colonial appropriation of corn. This short history culminates with the Green Giant brand ‘Niblets’ corn advertisement on the back cover of the 1953 Thanksgiving issue of *Life* magazine. As a framing device for the entire volume that dichotomizes indigenous knowledge and science, this image is revisited with such frequency that readers might have benefited from seeing a replication of the image within the book.

Following Zogry’s brief history of corn as an iconic indigenous food of the Americas, the subsequent chapters consider tepary beans, salmon, wild rice, caribou, huckleberries, ‘the Black Drink’ (a tea made from the leaves and twigs of
yaupon holly), and, finally, frybread. Andrea McComb Sanchez’s chapter on the O’odham tepary bean (bawĭ) employs the magazine Native Foodways, published by Tohono O’odham Community Action [TOCA], which produced three issues between 2013 and 2015. Significantly, the tepary bean is ‘one of the most heat- and drought-tolerant crops in the world, along with having the highest protein content of any bean’ (p. 36). Suzanne Crawford O’Brien’s chapter on salmon, the indigenous peoples of the Mid-Columbia River, Coyote, and dams includes highlights such as Coyote orally pleasuring himself (p. 68) and learning from the teachings of his own feces (p. 56).

The book is especially noteworthy for having not one, but two, exceptional chapters on wild rice (manoomin). Michael D. McNally’s chapter introduces readers to the significance and history of manoomin and Anishinaabe Peoplehood through the present. Significantly, in February 2019 the White Earth Nation’s government legally adopted the Rights of Manoomin within their jurisdiction as part of a global movement to extend rights language to non-human (other-than-human) life, which was ostensibly the first articulation of the legal rights of a plant made by any Indigenous Nation (91). McNally uses Catherine Bell’s ritualization, attending to ‘how people don’t so much practice ritual as ritualize practices’ (p. 82). Lawrence W. Gross’s subsequent chapter on ‘Harvesting Wild Rice’ pairs well with McNally’s; not counting the epilogue, Gross’s chapter is both the shortest and, to this reader, the sweetest. A beautiful meditation on the contemplative practice of harvesting wild rice, Gross carefully attends to ‘the bodily experience of harvesting wild rice, involving as it does not just the sights and sounds, but the smell and feel of being out on the lake’ (p. 99).

David Walsh’s chapter on caribou and ‘Caribou Eaters’ explores contemporary Tłįch Dene efforts to maintain their relationship with caribou, even as they move away from hunting and eating caribou due to the effects of anthropogenic climate change. Suzanne Crawford-O’Brien and Kimberly Wogahn discuss Coast Salish huckleberry cultivation and food sovereignty, before offering a critique of ‘the predominately Euro-American alternative food movement’ (p. 145). Crawford-O’Brien and Wogahn argue that ‘Coast Salish foodscape reflect an edible and simultaneously relational landscape’ (p. 142). Readers may be interested in what might be conceived as non-consensual blood offerings taken by huckleberries in the absence of offerings of water, tobacco, or food. As described by an anonymized Nisqually tribal member at the Nisqually community garden: ‘Sometimes if you don’t give an offering, you know, you can get, you can a little bit get hurt, and that’s just their way of taking the offering. Just a little scratch’ (p. 144).

R. Alfred Vick’s chapter on ‘the Black Drink’ offers the most historical (as opposed to ethnographic) chapter, tracing the drink’s history from 3000 years ago through the present, noting various transformations and its decline as well as its commodified and commercialized return (pp. 20, 187). In the last chapter, Dennis Kelly explores the semiotics of frybread as simultaneously a symbol of pan-Indian identity and a symbol of the oppression experienced by the indigenous peoples of the Americas. ‘[T]hat seeming contradiction’, Kelly argues persuasively, ‘gives frybread its power and significance’ (p. 196).

Finally, in her brief epilogue, Micheline Pesantubbee notes that ‘[m]ost of the authors of this volume are scholars of religious studies, more specifically Native
American religious studies, or they have participated in sessions of the Native Traditions in the Americas Unit of the American Academy of Religion’ (p. 212). And as is all too common in religious studies scholarship, the volume exhibits an excessive and at times uncritical use of ubiquitous terms such as ‘sacred’ and other related jargon. For example, while Walsh seems to studiously avoid using ‘sacred’ as an analytical category, McNally regularly employs the term with reservations, noting ‘[b]ut even as I utter “sacred food,” I risk the hackneyed image that so often comes with the term sacred’ (p. 73), and other authors use the category indiscriminately. As a consequence, many, though certainly not all, of the contributors participate in what might be conceived as the ‘religionization’ of Indigenous Peoples, traditions, and practices.

Published during the COVID pandemic, *Native Foodways* might leave some readers wondering about the impact of the global pandemic may have had on movements revitalizing indigenous foodways. Moreover, some readers might ask if the book’s framework could be broadened beyond the geographical confines of North America to open comparisons with other indigenous traditions in ‘supratribal’, transnational, hemispheric, and global contexts as well as what tradeoffs might accompany such broadening and narrowing of scope. *Native Foodways* should enjoy a wide readership across several disciplines, including anthropology, environmental studies, food studies, religious studies, and Native American and Indigenous studies. Available in paperback and as an e-book, *Native Foodways* is affordable and accessible to students. I, for one, look forward to assigning the text to my upper division course on ‘Religion and the Environment’ at Hamilton College, which is cross-listed in American Studies, Environmental Studies, and Religious Studies.

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