

1984

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Recommended Citation

Covington, James W. (1984) "Book Review," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 10 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune/vol10/iss1/12>

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BOOK REVIEW

By JAMES W. COVINGTON

Their Number Become Thinned: Native North American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America, Henry F. Dobyns, University of Tennessee Press, no price listed, 1983.

The greatest loss of American Indian population was due to diseases introduced by the white men rather than wars, slave hunts or starvation. The native North Americans had little or no immunity against such diseases as smallpox, measles, bubonic plague, typhus, diphtheria, cholera and scarlet fever. In one hundred years after the Spaniards came to Central Mexico it was estimated that due to disease the population was reduced by 95 percent. This great loss of population was due to lack of immunity and subsequent development of virulent strains of virus, complications among people who have heavy melanin deposits in the skin and lack of life-support systems during illness.

The area inhabited by the Timucuan speaking bands in Florida is used by the author as a case study in which food resources are examined, the social structure and estimation of population." For those persons interested in the pre-Seminole Indians of Florida, this book is a "must-see." It examines in detail edible wild plants, sources of animal protein, cultivation of plants, population and settlement demography and finally, the rise of epidemics among the natives when the white man comes and decline of population. Table 27 contains a list of

epidemic disease episodes among Native Americans of Colonial Florida from 1564-1727.

Dr. Dobyns has done an excellent job in writing this book. The research is thorough and it represents a major advance into the effect of disease upon the North American Indian, especially of the Florida peninsula.