



**Brack, H.G.**

**NORUMBEGA RECONSIDERED:  
MAWOOSHEN AND THE WAWENOC  
DIASPORA:**

*The Indigenous Communities of the Central  
Maine Coast in Protohistory: 1535-1620*

Davistown Museum (386 pp.)

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A treatise that seeks to rediscover a people erased from modern memory by the clumsy naming tactics of early European explorers.

Brack aims to identify the indigenous inhabitants of the central Maine coast during the region's initial recorded contact with Europeans in the early 1600s. He tackles a debate within the historical community about whether to use the English explorers' system of naming the ethnic groups or the more restrictive French approach. In doing so, the author makes a powerful argument for synthesizing all available sources that reveal a more prominent role for a confederacy of communities broadly known as Abanaki, and more specifically the Wawenoc group. While Brack acknowledges many lingering questions in the historical record, he also contends that the Wawenocs were a significant force in early Maine before being eliminated by inter-tribal fur-trade wars and pandemic disease. He provides fascinating descriptions of the Europeans' tendency to conflate peoples

under generic names, which caused the Wawenoc appellation, and thus the record of the group's existence and identity, to disappear from history. However, Brack fails to explain what was unique about the group and what should be remembered about them. He bemoans the lack of native voices in the historical narrative, further leaving the reader wondering why he simply provides addresses of indigenous websites rather than exploring content more in-depth. Brack's reinterpretation of primary-source documents is nonetheless masterful, broadening the historical lens to account for the ethnocentric interests of native translators, the French settlers' motives for giving primacy to indigenous groups allied with them and the effect of 17th-century authors, who had not settled or traveled widely in Wawenoc territory. A combination of those and other cited factors could plausibly have drowned the memory of a people.

Raises important questions about the ability of history to chronicle a truth that transcends its authors' biases.

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