



A Sorrow in Our Heart: The Life of Tecumseh

By Allan W. Eckert

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A biography of the famous Shawnee describes Tecumseh's plan to amalgamate all North American tribes into one people, his role as statesman and military strategist, and his death in the Battle of Thames.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Though there are many biographies of the great Shawnee chief Tecumseh (1768-1813), this effort by historical novelist Eckert (*The Frontiersman*) may spark new interest--and controversy--with its "hidden dialogue" technique. After more than 25 years of research, the author felt free to recreate Tecumseh's conversations and thoughts in what proves to be an entertaining blend of fact and fiction. The orator and organizer's life was shaped by his tribe's tragic confrontation with westward-moving whites, who encroached on Native American lands along the Ohio River valley. His long struggle against this dispossession led Tecumseh to create a historic confederacy of tribes, but this crowning achievement was destroyed by his own brother at Tippecanoe in 1811. Eckert's dialogue is clunky, yet his colorful evocation of this seminal American figure will be more broadly accessible than are drier, more factual accounts.

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From Kirkus Reviews

A spirited but misdirected stab at a definitive biography of the great Shawnee warrior, from prolific historian and novelist Eckert, whose six-volume nonfiction *The Winning of America* series (Twilight of Empire, Gateway to Empire, etc.) paved the way for this epic. Employing what he terms ``narrative biography'' as a touchstone (and as an apparent euphemism for poetic license), Eckert embarks on a quest for the real Tecumseh, seeking a life buried beneath countless legends and tales. The result is a mammoth account of a remarkable American from the spectacular moment of his birth--concurrent with the appearance of a brilliant shooting star--to his sudden death in the Battle of Thames in 1813, an event described in more than 40 different ways by ``eyewitnesses.'' Along with the portrait of a man of keen insight and ability--a natural leader who eschewed the role of chief but who sought tirelessly to unite all tribes in a pan-Indian movement--emerges a rich tapestry of Native American society in the Ohio region during Tecumseh's time. The Indian leader and his family, especially his brother, the prophet Tenskwatawa, figured dramatically in the growing violence along the frontier as white settlers swarmed across the Appalachians onto Indian lands. By emphasizing the greatness of Tecumseh, however, Eckert minimizes the significance of tribal unification as a wider phenomenon and the role of spiritual leaders in firing that movement, to the extent that, for instance, Tenskwatawa is depicted as a sniveling conniver achieving renown largely through his brother's generosity. A biography that succeeds better as fiction. Astoundingly detailed but ambitious to a fault, in its interpretative zeal it strays from, or at least embellishes, the historical record to the point of being suspect. --

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Users Review

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