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Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom. By Tiya Miles

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Author

Snyder, Christina

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began rallying for permission to erect casinos on indigenous lands as a means of economic development, a permission that was granted when Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988. The current controversy about the benefits of casino money could broaden if the American public was made aware of the traditional role played by gambling in indigenous communities, such as in the “stick games” of California Indian nations, and how indigenous gambling reflects theories of gift exchange, which differ radically from the capitalist notions that undergird white American casinos.

Undoubtedly, the biggest merit of the book is to uncover the “social facts” that shaped American anthropology. Leeds-Hurwitz’s book dispells the persistent myth of anthropologists’ objectivity when describing or portraying indigenous peoples worldwide. The politics of the professionalization of American anthropology remains somewhat taboo within the field since there is little interest in uncovering details of its social history. George Stocking, George Marcus, and Clifford Geertz are some of the best-known scholars who have attempted to capture the politics of anthropology-making, but they have done so largely from a theoretical standpoint that avoids the social and personal issues intrinsic to the formation of any academic field. In this respect Leeds-Hurwitz, as an “outsider” and speech-communication specialist, brings original insights to how academia really works and why interpretations become social facts, thereby unveiling some of the “mysteries” that have preserved indigenous hostility toward anthropologists—alive and well to this day—in the United States. Contemporary American Indian writers, scholars, and activists nowadays claim, as de Angulo did almost a century ago, that indigenous knowledge—including emotions, actions, embodied skills, taxonomies, and other forms of communication—are indeed more representative of what anthropologists know, what we don’t know, and what is probably unknowable about any human population altogether.

Mariana Leal Ferreira

San Francisco State University

Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom.

By Tiya Miles. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. 306 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

In this engaging work, Tiya Miles explores slavery, nationhood, and kinship among the nineteenth-century Cherokees. Miles joins a growing body of scholars interested in the complex relationships between peoples of African and Native descent in the American South and Indian Territory. *Ties that Bind* focuses on a single Afro-Cherokee family, the Shoeboots, from the late-eighteenth century through the Civil War: “Their saga reflects the complexities of colonialism, slavery, racialization, nationalism, and the family as a site of subjugation and resistance” (4). In addition to historical documents, Miles weaves literary criticism, anthropology, slave autobiographies, and recent works of fiction to create an insightful, lively narrative.

The Shoeboots family has bequeathed to scholars a sparse but fascinating documentary record. Tarsekayahke, or Shoe Boots, was a notable Cherokee warrior who resided in the Etowah valley. Around 1799, Shoe Boots either purchased or captured a black woman named Doll, who became his sexual partner and the mother of his five children. While the exact nature of the relationship between Shoe Boots and Doll remains unclear, it developed within a rapidly changing Cherokee Nation. Whereas Cherokee clans had formerly adopted people of African descent, the status of blacks began to erode in the late-eighteenth century as an increasingly litigious Cherokee government codified black disenfranchisement. Concerned over the fate of his Afro-Cherokee children, Shoe Boots came before the Cherokee council in 1824 to plead for his children's citizenship: "Knowing what property I may have is to be divided amongst the Best of my friends, how can I think of them having bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh to be called their property" (1). The council granted this request, ensuring the freedom of his eldest children—Elizabeth, Molly, and John—but did not guarantee the same for William and Lewis, who were born after the decision. In 1829, the family suffered a double tragedy with Shoe Boots's death and Georgia's extension of jurisdiction over the Cherokees in a bid to expel them. During the Removal crisis, Georgia citizens stole members of the Shoe Boots family and held them as slaves. Eventually, all members of the family arrived in Indian Territory, though they very different lives. Accepted as citizens, Elizabeth, Molly, and John enjoyed their rights to own property, farm Cherokee land, and marry freely. The younger children, however, lived as slaves or marginal members of Cherokee society. Their mother, Doll, served the Ridge household until 1849, when Susannah Ridge's will freed her. As the widow of military officer Captain Shoe Boots, Doll received a land grant of 120 acres in 1858.

Miles uses the Shoeboots family's history to explore the nature of slavery and racism within the Cherokee Nation. She begins by tentatively linking slavery to the ancient Cherokee practice of captivity but does no more than hint at the connection between the two. During his career as a warrior, Shoeboots captured enemies, including a white woman named Clarinda who became his "wife." Clarinda eventually rejoined her family in Kentucky, at which point Shoeboots took Doll as his lover. Although Shoeboots presumably held each woman against her will, Clarinda's whiteness afforded her an elevated status. Miles stresses that the partnership between Shoeboots and Doll coincided with increasing racialization within the nation. According to Miles, as the Cherokees strove to adhere to the tenets of the federal government's civilization policy they adopted many of the racist values of their white neighbors, including black enslavement. Even as Miles underscores "the unknowability of [Doll's] experience," she combines historical documents and economic data from the Cherokee Nation with autobiographical and fictional accounts of black slavery in an attempt to recreate Doll's life (26). In doing so, she seemingly concurs with Claudio Saunt's argument that historians often underestimate the severity of black bondage within Indian nations ("The Paradox of Freedom: Tribal Sovereignty and Emancipation during the Reconstruction of Indian Territory," *The Journal of Southern History* 70 [2004]).

Miles argues that black disempowerment was closely linked to the rise of the centralized Cherokee republic. While she acknowledges that Cherokee statesmen shaped the civilization policy according to Cherokee needs, Miles also suggests that they linked “progress” and slaveholding. Through legislation, those in power equated blackness with slavery and marginalized Afro-Cherokees. In defining nationhood, Cherokee statesmen, like their United States counterparts, used racial identity and exclusion. Beginning in 1808, the rise of the Cherokee republic paralleled the deterioration of relations between Cherokees and African Americans.

While nationhood threatened to exclude Afro-Cherokees, the bonds of kinship acted as an equally powerful force to protect the Shoebottoms family. As Miles points out, Doll’s race marginalized her in Cherokee society, but her clanlessness made her most vulnerable. While Doll never enjoyed rights as a Cherokee citizen, Shoebottoms’s plea to the Cherokee council secured citizenship for their three eldest children. Miles notes that Shoebottoms employed the language of kinship in his plea to the council, calling the children “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (1). Because Shoebottoms recognized the children as his kin and ensured their citizenship, Molly, John, and Elizabeth enjoyed a privileged status within the nation compared to other Afro-Cherokees. In Indian Territory, they settled along Honey Creek among elite, slaveholding Cherokee families who accepted, even protected them. Miles convincingly argues that kinship provided for exceptions “to the sanctioned rules of race” in Cherokee country (139).

As Miles acknowledges, the paucity of historical evidence documenting the Shoebottoms family saga made her project a difficult one. In compensation, she skillfully weaves disparate sources to create a rich narrative history. Addressing her use of fiction, Miles explains, “I also intertwine fictional representations of the trauma of slavery (as well as Indian Removal), because I believe that fiction uniquely captures the texture of the subjective experience” (212). Thus, Miles frequently uses Toni Morrison’s 1987 novel *Beloved* in imagining Doll’s life. Given the diversity of enslaved people’s experiences as well as Miles’s description of the unique nature of Cherokee slavery, the reader may question the appropriateness of such a comparison. While Doll remained clanless and marginal in Cherokee society, Shoebottoms acknowledged her as his “wife” and their children together as his kin (179). As Miles has argued, kinship and community often mitigated the worst aspects of racism and slavery among the Cherokees.

Despite her research challenges, Miles has crafted a remarkable work that is both historiographically significant and a pleasure to read. *Ties that Bind* will find a wide audience among those interested in Native American, African American, and Southern history. Miles bravely steps into the “historical silence that often surrounds interactions between black and Native people” and emerges with a beautifully insightful and painfully human narrative (xiv).

Christina Snyder

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill