UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers. By Kent G. Lightfoot.

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6pr849tk

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 29(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Paddison, Joshua

Publication Date

2005

DOI

10.17953

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

underscoring the uniqueness of this specific sociohistorical moment. On the other hand, he places his discussions of American Indians in a broader context, contrasting his observations about expectations and Indians with analyses of the ways that modern cultural formations and ideological assemblages have shaped the experiences and engagements of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. Turning on inclusion as metaphor, aspiration, and ground of action, this comparative discussion reveals important insights into distinct processes of racialization and the uniqueness of indigenity and indigenism in the United States.

Indians in Unexpected Places is also a highly personal book. Deloria effectively draws from his own experience and family history to add vitality and humanity to his narrative. In fact, his obvious investment in the stories, peoples, and ideas enlivening his account only enhance the significance of this monograph. It fosters a lively, approachable style that encourages a reflective, if not intimate, engagement.

Indians in Unexpected Places should quickly become required reading. Scholars concerned with questions of Indian history, cultural politics, identity, and decolonization will benefit from Deloria's telling of these "secret histories." More important, if somewhat optimistic, traditional historians have even more to gain from the ways in which Deloria problematizes accepted understandings, while foregrounding agency, contradictions, and domination.

Unlike many scholarly works, the audience for *Indians in Unexpected Places* goes well beyond academics. Teachers would be wise to consider using it in undergraduate and graduate courses, as a means to disrupt expectations and introduce students to the complexities of the American Indian experience. And finally, the accessibility and contents of *Indians in Unexpected Places* should encourage general readers and public libraries to purchase this remarkable text.

C. Richard King
Washington State University

Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers. By Kent G. Lightfoot. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. 355 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Why does the federal government recognize and reward certain California Indian groups and not others? In *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants* Berkeley anthropologist Kent G. Lightfoot locates the answer to this question in California's colonial pasts. He compares the effects of Spanish, Mexican, and Russian regimes on nineteenth-century Native peoples along the California coast, showing how present-day federal designations of "authentic Indianness" are shaped by divergent colonial legacies. By connecting past and present, Lightfoot's far-reaching work of historical anthropology powerfully condemns the government's tribal recognition process as naive, discriminatory, and guilty of overlooking those Indians hit hardest by colonial disruptions.

Reviews 115

The bulk of Lightfoot's book is devoted to a systematic comparison of Indian negotiations of Spanish/Mexican and Russian colonial projects. He constructs his comparison across seven categories; enculturation programs, relocation efforts, opportunities for social mobility, labor practices, frequency and nature of interethnic sexual unions, demographic decline, and chronology. Building on the scholarship of Albert Hurtado, Douglas Monroy, Lisbeth Haas, Robert Jackson, Edward Castillo, and others, Lightfoot portrays the missions (active from 1769 to the 1830s) as "massive enculturation machines" that brought death, dislocation, and factionalism (50). Lightfoot insists, however, that, despite intense challenges, mission Indians were not "broken, despondent, and spiritless people" but dynamic survivors who formed extensive concealed networks within pluralistic communities (112). With its harsh labor regime, Russia's Ross mercantile colony (active from 1812 to 1841) was no less disruptive on native groups, but the Russians—caring only about profits, not souls—did not attempt to radically enculturate locals. Indians enjoyed greater freedom to choose when and how to participate in the colony and greater access to ancestral homelands. They incorporated Russian goods, materials, and livestock into traditional practices. Over time, once-discrete political groups consolidated as Kashaya Pomo under the leadership of a single leader, Toyon.

Throughout, Lightfoot emphasizes how Native peoples continually formed new identities, social patterns, and tribal relationships at both the missions and at Ross. But the Spanish/Mexican and Russian colonial programs presented different difficulties and opportunities to local Indians, and the resulting cultural transformations took disparate forms. He identifies three broad social processes that emerged in these cross-cultural frontiers by the 1830s. On the northern and central coast, Miwok, Ohlone, Esselen, Salinan, Chumash, and Gabrielino speakers together established new networks of social relations and new pan-mission identities as "old distinctions based on ancestral homelands, native polities, or language" became less relevant to displaced second- and third-generation mission Indians (202). On the southern coast Luiseño and Siegueño speakers retained traditional political structures and ritual systems because of the less-extensive relocation programs instituted by Franciscans at missions San Luis Rey and San Diego. At Ross, where the Russian administrators did not relocate Natives out of ancestral villages, previously separate but similar communities formed a Kashaya Pomo confederacy with a single leader in order to negotiate more effectively with the Russians. Although Lightfoot does not draw an analogy to the Great Lakes region, he gives evidence that the Russians' arrival in northern California in 1812 created a similar "middle ground" where the Kashaya Pomo were able to win concessions by playing competing imperial powers off one another.

In his final chapter Lightfoot connects these diverse legacies of colonialism to the evolution of federal Indian policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Between 1875 and 1891 the US government allocated federal lands to twenty-seven California Indian groups, but only one—the Chumash-speaking Santa Ynez community—lived in central or northern California. The so-called "mission Indians" promoted by Helen Hunt Jackson

and other reformers were largely those around missions San Luis Rey and San Diego who had maintained their traditional land base. During the period 1906 to 1930 Congress finally established thirty-six land grants for northern California Indians, but only one group in the former Spanish/Mexican/ Russian frontier lands received a grant—the Kashaya Pomo near the former Ross colony. Lightfoot demonstrates how these federal policies were shaped by Alfred Kroeber and other University of California anthropologists, who defined "true" Indians as those who were isolated, seemingly unchanging, and possessing a long checklist of "Indian" cultural traits. These biases led anthropologists to ignore Indians in the former mission lands and study only groups, like the Kashaya Pomo, that "spoke a single language, recognized an overarching 'tribal' political structure, could point to the boundaries of a welldefined territory, and continued to embrace many cultural practices that outsiders would clearly identify as 'Indian'" (228). Federal land grants went only to "true" Indians, as defined by anthropologists, and subsequent federal recognition went almost exclusively to groups with land. California coastal Indians did not "melt away," as claimed by Kroeber, but had adopted new identities and practices unrecognized by authorities.

In addition to demonstrating the importance of colonial history to contemporary political struggles, *Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants* presents a lucid synthesis of recent scholarship by a generation of historians, anthropologists, and ethnic studies scholars. Lightfoot deftly summarizes and evaluates dozens of complicated and often competing historiographical interpretations. He also draws on his own archaeological research at Fort Ross State Historic Park, conducted with the cooperation of the Department of Parks and Recreation and Kashaya Pomo elders. His book displays the advantages of utilizing archaeological evidence, archival sources, and Native narratives (including oral histories and oral traditions) in concert to portray colonial encounters from all perspectives. Unfortunately, rather than weaving these types of sources together into a cohesive analysis, Lightfoot discusses each type in turn, making the book disjointed if thorough. Likewise, his repeated use of his seven comparative categories renders his narrative more plodding than elegant.

Two ironies worth mentioning emerge from and within Lightfoot's book. First, during the 1880s to 1930s, a period when the federal government was ostensibly dedicated to "assimilating" Indians into American society, officials recognized and rewarded only those groups imagined as most traditional and least assimilated! Indians were caught in an impossible bind—the government urged them to change but rewarded only those deemed sufficiently Indian. Second, despite Lightfoot's constant emphasis on Indian "agency," his focus on differences between colonial policies—rather than pre-1769 differences between Native groups—ultimately makes Europeans the engines of historical change. He explains how Spaniards differed from Russians but not how Ohlone speakers differed from Kashaya Pomo. His chapter on precolonial California is a perceptive critique of early anthropologists' conceptions but does little to establish the preexisting rivalries and relationships within and among Native groups that surely influenced the course of colonial interactions.

Reviews 117

Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants explains how contemporary debates over federal Indian recognition, tribal sovereignty, and gaming rights were shaped by nineteenth-century European imperialism. It is a persuasive critique of federal policies and early anthropology, as well as an important synthesis of recent archaeological, anthropological, and historical research on Native Californians, missionization, and colonialism.

Joshua Paddison University of California, Los Angeles

Into the Canyon: Seven Years in Navajo Country. By Lucy Moore. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. 224 pages. \$24.95 cloth.

This book rewards its readers in a number of ways. It is a quietly thoughtprovoking, delightful book, and it is practical on several levels. Anglos might consider Into the Canyon a guide to interaction with Navajos. Certainly Moore invites the reader to think about cultural behaviors. Moore describes an early encounter and her assessment of different cultural behaviors: "A Navajo encountering a stranger needed to be cautious, to wait, and to rely on good instincts before making a decision. In contrast, I saw myself and other Anglos hustling and bustling everywhere, in a hurry, talking constantly, too enthusiastically, often about nothing, or at least nothing important" (41). Later she says, "They [Navajos] were very, very patient, or perhaps they were simply good at waiting. Rushing was an Anglo specialty" (167). She decries the actions of an outsider wanting to do good: "But it was inappropriate for this outsider to arrive with these big ideas and ignore the local place and more immediate needs" (138). So, while this book might serve as an advice book for Anglos interacting with Navajos, clearly it offers advice for anyone engaging in cross-cultural activities.

The book will provoke thought about what constitutes a specifically American Indian issue and what constitutes a larger human issue. Moore attends a march in Gallup in 1973 and writes about it: "There were very few Anglos, and I was glad I was there. Some Navajo events should be all Navajo, and Anglos should stay away. Others, like this one, needed other faces as well. It was a justice problem" (146). Moore writes of practices that speak of the irony of Indianness. She says in the section dealing with her time as a Headstart teacher: "I relaxed about the cultural anomalies inherent in being an Anglo teacher of Navajo children, in a setting defined by Navajo adults who often wished they were Anglo" (97).

Mainstream students of American history might read the book as an introduction to the simple idea that American Indian tribes are different from each other. While this idea seems simple, many have trouble with the concept. Moore says that she and her husband were surrounded by, and thus learned about, Navajo culture. Still, with their children they attend Hopi ceremonies. She says of one experience, "Again, I was sure that this was going to be such an important and culturally rich experience for both my children, and again, I