

negotiating the complex legal and political world and one that gained the Chitimacha trust status for their land and a federally supported school for their children.

Although this study of the Chitimacha basket market is concerned primarily with economic and political issues around the turn of the twentieth century, additional studies of the basket market could also reveal much about indigenous plant management and sustainability. The once-ubiquitous river cane in Louisiana had by the 1900s, as the author explains, become scarce and difficult to access due to the building of levees and clearing of canebrakes for roads and plantations—so much so that the Chitimacha considered planting canes in the schoolyard to provide supplies for teaching basket weaving. A further analysis of Chitimacha basket weaving along the lines of M. Kat Anderson's *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and Management of California's Natural Resources* (2005), a study of how California Native peoples actively managed plants used in making their baskets, could provide insights into how deeply Chitimacha basket weaving is tied to social values and the ecology of Louisiana wetlands. Such a study would interest those concerned with contemporary wetlands revitalization efforts.

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**The Women's National Indian Association: A History.** Edited by Valerie Sherer Mathes. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. 352 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

The first full-length study of the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA), the political organization that led the late-nineteenth century Indian reform movement, is a rich collection of historical essays that illuminate the specific workings of the WNIA as well as the dual contexts of Indian policy advocacy and women's reform efforts of which the WNIA was a part. Edited by Valerie Sherer Mathes, the volume features fourteen chapters, plus a foreword and an afterword, by nine authors. It is divided thematically into four parts, with two to four chapters addressing each of the following topics: the history of the organization; the role of domesticity; specific histories of regional auxiliaries; and the context of women's history and reform work. An appendix describes sixty-one mission stations established by the WNIA. This excellent collection is a much-needed contribution to the history of American Indian policy, particularly during the assimilation period (roughly 1879–1934), and offers carefully researched insights about the WNIA, the policies it promoted, and the social worlds in which it operated.

The WNIA was cofounded in 1879 in Philadelphia by Mary Bonney and Amelia Stone Quinton, who shared both dismay at the treatment of American Indians, whose lands in the West were increasingly under threat, and also concern that American expansion would disrupt missionary efforts among the tribes (26). Mere months later, the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee, led by prominent businessmen, clergy, and former abolitionists, was formed; in 1882, the Philadelphia-based Indian

Rights Association (IRA) was organized and soon established the annual Mohonk Conference to discuss and promote Indian policies. Although different in their origins and constituencies, these three organizations shared the banner of “Friends of the Indians” and advocated assimilation (that is, the cultural, social, and political reprogramming of American Indians to conform to the white, middle-class norms of these largely Protestant reformers) as the humanitarian alternative to outright annihilation of indigenous lives. They promoted the policies of Christianization, allotment of reservation lands, educational regimes for Indian children that often entailed removal from their families, and the conferral of American citizenship for American Indians. What made the contributions of the WNIA distinct were its constitution as primarily a women’s organization; its Christian mission structure; and its focus upon the ideological and practical implementation of white, middle-class domesticity at the familial and national levels. The organization was at its height prior to World War I, and slowly diminished through the Depression until it eventually disbanded in 1951.

Part 1, on the foundations of the organization, emphasizes the role of the WNIA and its early petition efforts, which have tended to be eclipsed in general histories of the period. As Mathes’s chapter on the formative years points out, the petition—the appeal of subordinates to superiors—was a strategic and “proper” mode of political action for white women who lacked citizenship rights but sought to influence public policy. The WNIA’s first petition drive, aimed to stop settler encroachment on Indian Territory in 1879, resulted in a 300-foot document with 13,000 signatures, presented to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880 (28). Other petitions followed, and within two years the WNIA had the ear of Congress and had expanded into twenty states. When the IRA arose in 1882, it credited the WNIA for beginning the reform effort, and although the two organizations sought to share the work, the male-dominated IRA emerged as the dominant public voice while the WNIA turned its attention to the “home front”: missionary outreach directly among the Indians themselves. This chapter, which reveals the gendered nature of the WNIA’s political activism, is complemented by Lori Jacobson’s content analysis of the first decade of WNIA’s periodical, *The Indian’s Friend*, which began its sixty-three-year run in 1888.

The analytical framework of part 2 is the “domestic agenda,” here doubly inflected as the assimilationist drive to convert Indians into American citizens as part of national domestication, and the efforts focused on the Indian home and family to achieve that end. This topic has figured prominently in recent monographs, and these chapters add more fine-grained details to that body of scholarship. Four essays detail different initiatives that the WNIA ran: the home building and loan program, aimed to secure contemporary housing (as well as its assumed virtues: cleanliness, monogamy, wage labor); the field matron program that was soon adopted by the Indian Service, to promote white domesticity on the reservations; a complex advocacy role in relation to Chiricahua Apache Prisoners of War and to Seminoles in Florida; and a brokering program for selling handmade baskets by California Indian women. Together these chapters reveal how domesticity functioned ideologically and practically in the assimilation project, and how both white women and Indian women pursued paths in their own best interests given the limits to their available choices. As the authors are careful

to point out, although white and Indian women faced some common limitations as women based on race and social class, the WNIA (which dropped the “W” in 1901) enjoyed far greater privileges. The WNIA gave white women a voice in public affairs, and they vigorously worked to transform Indian women—many of whom enjoyed greater gender equality and power within their Native traditions—into subservient wives and mothers. Lisa Emmerlich’s excellent essay points out the irony that “these ladylike refugees from the stifling social norms of the late-Victorian era labored to confine tribal women within the same boundaries they’d only recently escaped” (98).

The collection’s final essay is a compelling exploration of the power dynamics between the WNIA and the indigenous women and families they chose as their mission field. Drawing on historical and literary texts, Jacobson coins “the erotics of reform” as a way of naming the seduction narrative of assimilation as being one of consent and desire between the ardent reformer and her object of reform, and also as the practical site upon which the reform efforts operated. On the rhetorical level, reformers constructed narratives of “winning” their converts, while on the practical level they sought to “control sexual behaviors as a means of bringing the objects of reform in line” with the assimilationist agenda (271).

Throughout the collection the authors seek to represent the complex positions that indigenous women navigated, and offer, as they can, glimpses into the experiences of indigenous women. But the focus of the archive, and of the book, is upon the WNIA, and as the conclusion of the book urges, there remain other archives, voices, and stories to recover. This collection is an inspiring and rigorous example of approaches and research that will fuel future scholarship on this fascinating period of American history and the complex alliances and forms of violence it engendered. *The Women’s National Indian Association: A History*, is highly recommended to scholars of women and gender studies, American history, and interdisciplinary Native American studies.

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