University of New Mexico
UNM Digital Repository

American Studies Faculty and Staff Publications | American Studies

Winter 2009

# Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond and Going Indian Book Reviews

Alison Fields

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_fsp

Recommended Citation
Fields, Alison. "Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond and Going Indian Book Reviews." 56, 1 (2009): 209-212. http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/amst_fsp/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the American Studies at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in American Studies Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

resident of that community, Rudolph Walton, who combined a strong commitment to his Presbyterian church with earning a good living by selling his silver jewelry to tourists and with carrying out his traditional ritual obligations to various families and clans in Sitka. (It should be pointed out that the Tlingit segment of Raibmon's book relies quite heavily on the unpublished dissertation of Walton's granddaughter, Joyce Walton Shales, which focused on this remarkable man.)

Despite my disagreements with some of Raibmon's interpretations of Tlingit history, I found her thought-provoking book to be an important addition to the growing literature on Euro-American stereotypes of Indian people and the various ways in which the latter have both appropriated and challenged those stereotypes. Last but not least, the book is well written and nicely illustrated with maps and photographs.

## References

Kan, Sergei
2004 It's Only Half a Mile from Savagery to Civilization: American Tourists and Southeastern Alaska Natives in the Late Nineteenth Century. In *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*. Marie Mauzé, Michael Harkin, and Sergei Kan, eds. Pp. 201-220. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

DOI 10.1215/00141801-2008-047

**Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond.** By Renya K. Ramirez. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. xii + 273 pp., acknowledgments, introduction, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index. $22.95 paper.)

**Going Indian.** By James Hamill. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. xiii + 216 pp., preface, appendix, bibliography, index. $40.00 cloth, $20.00 paper.)

Alison Fields, *University of New Mexico*

Two new books, *Native Hubs* by Reyna Ramirez and *Going Indian* by James Hamill, contribute to an ever-growing body of scholarship examining the way Native people understand identity and belonging in today's world.

While many Native Americans today live in urban environments, Reyna Ramirez argues that separation from a tribal land base does not equate to cultural exile. By drawing on Laverne Roberts's concept of the

hub, Ramirez shows how Native people transmit culture, create community, and maintain identity across tribes and geography. The hub is a gendered concept, "a Native woman's conceptual frame of mobility between urban and reservation settings; a mechanism for Native culture, community, and identity transmission; and a political vision of how to organize across difference and geographic distance while living deterritorialized" (200). Hubs are geographic sites and may include events and organizations in the city or on the reservation. Ramirez investigates gathering places such as powwows, American Indian Alliance meetings, sweat lodge ceremonies, and school board meetings. Hubs can also be virtual, upheld through storytelling, imagination, and memory sharing. Further, Ramirez claims, the hub "has the potential to strengthen Native identity and provide a sense of belonging, as well as to increase the political power of Native peoples" (3). By creating networks between urban, rural, and reservation areas, the hub can act as a mechanism for social change.

Ramirez focuses her study of Native hubs largely in San Jose, California, a site where, beginning in the 1950s, thousands of Native Americans were federally relocated. The San Francisco Bay region is also a significant setting for Indian activism—most notably the late 1960s takeover of Alcatraz Island as Indian land. The area is home to the Muwekma Ohlones, a tribe that has been denied federal recognition, as well as other Native peoples from across the United States and Mexico. Ramirez uses the concept of the hub to argue that urban Indians are transnationals, connected to their tribal communities yet separated from their land base. Ramirez's field research, first conducted as part of the Santa Clara Oral History Project from 1993 to 1996 and then with Miztec Indian members of the Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations in 2002 and 2003, reflects this range of Native experiences in California.

As a woman of Winnebago, Ojibwe, and white ancestry who was raised in Silicon Valley, Ramirez thoughtfully negotiates her social position as a scholar in her own community. By incorporating her field notes and long slices of narrative into her text, Ramirez employs a polyvocal methodology that emphasizes human agency. Indian people are given space to make sense of their own experiences. Ramirez also strives to fill in gaps in existing scholarship. Her insistence on privileging female voices is Ramirez's response to decades of anthropology that rendered Native women silent. By including Miztec Indian women, Ramirez's work takes on a hemispheric dimension. Through her scholarly contributions and participation in Roberts's Native American oral history project, Ramirez engages in hub making of her own—opening up communication and understanding across tribal, national, age, gender, and other differences.

In *Going Indian*, James Hamill recognizes and describes an Indian ethnic identity in Oklahoma that is separate from tribal identity. This affirmation of Indian ethnicity, Hamill admits, is not a "stop the presses" moment for those familiar with the Native people of Oklahoma (8). However, he suggests that the white world is largely unaware of the complexities of Indian identity. The ethnic Indian identity in Oklahoma emerged from shared historical experiences and cultural traditions. Hamill begins by sketching out the political and physical environs that have shaped Indian life in Oklahoma and then moves through a number of formative historical events. First, he focuses on the policies of removal and reservations, both intended to physically eliminate Native people. Next, he explores the forced assimilation practices of allotment and Indian education. Hamill claims that Indian people have constructed their understanding of these events on "adversarial white-versus-Indian terms" and that these histories are now "significant symbolic boundaries in the construction of Indian ethnicity" (178).

The development of federal blood quantum requirements to establish an individual's tribal membership also had a significant impact on identity. Reflective of nineteenth-century scientific racism, blood quantum requirements were used to maintain a social order favoring Anglo-American power and control. Native people have contested blood quantum as a sole marker of Indian ethnicity and have insisted that participation in community life must accompany ancestry. While the institutions shaping community life are rooted in traditional values, they have also adapted to current circumstances. Institutions such as the Native American church and powwow draw on tribal religious practices but also act as symbolic boundaries between the Indian and white worlds. Beyond this divide, political tensions have developed among Native American groups, who view Indian ethnicity as a threat to tribal identity. While Hamill does not feel that Indian ethnic identity must operate at the expense of tribal culture, he believes that both "Indian and tribal identity require that people participate in the communities that the institutions, constructions of history, and understandings of nature symbolically demarcate" (180).

To show the way that Indian ethnicity has been constructed and maintained, Hamill draws on the voices of Indian people over the past century. Specifically, his work is based on interviews found in the Indian Pioneer Papers from the late 1930s and in the Doris Duke project from the late 1960s, both housed in the University of Oklahoma's Western History Collections. Additionally, Hamill conducted his own interviews with members of a number of Oklahoma tribes, whom he identifies by pseudonyms. Hamill recognizes the potential gaps and mistranslations that are possible in these

first-hand accounts. In the appendix, he notes that the interviews in the Indian Pioneer Papers were conducted before audio recorders and that the interviewers left little record of their methodology. Hamill also takes great care to position himself within his text, discussing his own background and identity, his existing expectations, and his ethnographic approach.

Identity politics is perhaps the most puzzled over and oft-discussed topic in Native American studies. While much of Hamill's book treads familiar ground, he gives a nuanced reading of how a set of shared experiences and relationships served to construct an Indian ethnic identity that exists beyond tribal boundaries.

DOI 10.1215/00141801-2008-048

**Making Indian Law: The Hualapai Land Case and the Birth of Ethnohistory.** By Christian W. McMillen. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007. xviii + 284 pp., acknowledgments, illustrations, index. $38.00 cloth.)

Tim Alan Garrison, *Portland State University*

Christian W. McMillen's work documents the long effort of the Hualapai Indians, who reside just south of the Grand Canyon, to secure federal recognition of their territorial homeland. In *United States v. Santa Fe Pacific Railroad*, the decision that validated the Hualapais's claim, the United States Supreme Court declared that the tribal nation did not have to prove that its title originated from a treaty or colonial-era grant. The Hualapais could show that they had occupied the territory from time immemorial, and the Court held that oral tradition could be used as evidence to prove possession and title. The decision, which received almost no public notice at the time thanks to its announcement on 8 December 1941, was an immediate victory for the Hualapais and, in the long run, a triumph for international indigenous property rights.

McMillen's work, however, does not concentrate on the Court's decision. Instead, he centers his narrative around Fred Mahone, a feisty Hualapai activist who returned from World War I with a mission to protect his people's land from expropriation by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad and its allies in the United States government. Mahone worked tirelessly to collect evidence of Hualapai ownership and lobbied for three decades to get the government to accept that evidence as proof of their title. In doing so, Mahone conducted dozens of extensive interviews with Huala-

Copyright of Ethnohistory is the property of Duke University Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.