

Sandos should be applauded not only for daring to revisit a much combed-over area of Native American studies but also for offering new insights such as religious compartmentalization and linguistic acculturation as processes for assessing Native reception of as well as resistance to mission culture. This book will be certainly of interest to students of anthropology and religion and especially to that large readership so passionate about anything having to do with California history.

Patrick Mingos, ed. *Black Indian Slave Narratives*. Winston-Salem NC: John F. Blair Publishers, 2004. 200 pp. Paper, \$10.95.

*Michael Spivey, University of North Carolina at Pembroke*

There has been a growing literature over the past decade concerning the extent and nature of Native American slavery within the United States. This literature provides a platform from which to ignite debates within the academy over old conceptual frameworks, which held a binary view of African Americans as enslaved within the borders of the United States, while Native American slaves were systematically exported to the West Indies and beyond in return for imported goods. Generally, this argument still prevails in many textbooks on race and ethnicity today. Under this modernist, binary vision, the cultures and histories of African Americans and Native Americans were seen as separate, making us blind to the complexities and contradictions of this controversial relationship. Spurred on by the emerging postmodern deconstruction of historical binary visions and conceptions, an alternative literature is asking the hard questions about the complex relationships between African Americans and Native Americans and in the process has opened a heated can of worms among academics, as well as among the Native American and African American communities. Questions over cultural identity, hybrid cultural forms, blood relationships, and the degree to which Native Americans found themselves as both slaves and slaveholders have come to the fore. Patrick Mingos's edited work on the role of Native Americans in American slavery has added new empirical insight into the oft-times vague and generalized assumptions, and macro-level, historical renderings of the subject matter.

The heart of Mingos's book is found in twenty-seven edited ex-slave narratives, which originated with the WPA (Works Progress Administration). Nearly twenty-two hundred interviews were conducted in the mid-1930s. These ex-slave narratives came from seventeen southern and border states. In particular, Mingos draws most of his narratives from the interviews conducted in the Oklahoma Indian Territories. With a fairly equal mix of both male and female voices, the narratives take the reader into the life-worlds of Native American and Afri-

can American ex-slaves and their Native American masters. Both evocative and rich in detail, the narratives (written in the dialect of the ex-slaves) weave a fabric of everyday life and work on plantations owned by Native American masters. One comes away with a sense that slave life under Native American masters was somehow less violent, deplorable, and, to some degree, a better life than that found under white masters.

Minges puts forth two general objectives for his book. First, he seeks to, “explore this intricate history from the viewpoints of persons both enslaved as Native Americans and enslaved by Native Americans. In viewing history from the underside, we get a unique perspective on the American experience” (xx). Subsumed under this first objective is Minges’s position that, in some ways, slavery under Native Americans was benign. He writes, “I do believe that slavery among the American Indians was substantively different from the general practice in the South. . . . One of the reasons for putting this collection together was to cast light upon this complicated matter” (xxii). Minges simply asks the reader to read the narratives and then make their own minds up about this issue.

Second, he hopes to offer evidence of the social and cultural bonds “between persons of African decent and Native Americans that run deep in their collective history” (xxii–xxiii). Minges provides a short historical synopsis of the preexisting system of Native American slavery in the South. Superimposed upon this system, African slavery, which emerged in the early seventeenth century, slowly replaced the Native American system as the major form of slavery in the South. For a number of years, however, Native Americans and African Americans shared a common experience under slavery. “Increasingly, the cultures of both peoples began to reflect their influence upon one another. Much of what we understand as African American culture may have been influenced by Native American traditions” (xviii). Conversely, at the end of his introduction, Minges declares that “in the end, we must find a way through this confusion to reach a ground where Native Americans can maintain their sovereignty and still acknowledge the powerful contribution that African Americans have made and continue to make to their society and culture” (xxiii).

Minges partially realizes his first objective. The narratives do, indeed, evoke a Native American slave world that held out better living conditions—for example, stories of better housing and clothing, plentiful food, and close relations with their Native American masters. However, Minges’s claim is limited along methodological lines. He admits that slave narratives, on the whole, tend to paint a rosy picture of their relationship with their white masters when interviewed by members of the white community. Yet, he takes for granted, to some degree, that the positive constructions of the Native American master and slave life should be taken at face value. This is the weakest point in Minges’s book. He left me wanting to know more about his methodology in relation to the ex-slave narratives.

His book could have benefited greatly from a self-reflexive, methodological chapter for a conclusion. How many interviews were taken in the Indian Territories? How did Minges decide which interviews to include in his book and which ones to leave out? Are there many narratives among the Native American ex-slaves that contradict Minges's claim? As is, the book has no conclusion at all. The author missed an opportunity to enlighten readers on the complex relationship between the researcher and his or her methods of inquiry.

Such criticisms notwithstanding, I find that Minges provides a unique and timely perspective in light of his second objective: the complex relationship between Native American and African American slaves, and the insights on the individual worlds of the Native American slave masters. Minges succeeds in moving beyond the institutional analysis of slavery to the individual experience and, in so doing, provides empirical evidence that Native Americans were enslaved and owned slaves. To hear the actual voices of the ex-slaves themselves telling their stories brings a human face to so much abstract academic theorizations and institutional historiography.

Finally, Minges's book could not be more timely, with so many arguments going on over the politics of identity, and the emerging claim that marginalized people deserve a more complex portrayal of their everyday lives. As the post-modern anthropologist James Clifford puts it in his book *The Predicament of Culture*: "It is more than ever crucial for different peoples to form complex concrete images of one another, as well as the relationships of knowledge and power that connect them" (1998:23). Minges's book will make a great supplemental reading for undergraduate and graduate classes dealing with American slavery, Native American studies, and race, class, and gender. General readers will also find the book fascinating.

Colin G. Calloway and Neal Salisbury, eds. *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience*. Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003. 164 pp. Cloth, \$39.50.

Gary C. Cheek Jr., *Mississippi State University*

During the last two decades, Native American scholarship has progressed as historians have gradually learned to cope with its unique problems. Perhaps the most difficult quandary concerns contention between American Indians and the writers of their past. Calloway and Salisbury indeed noted that "[h]istory is contested ground. Who tells it, who 'owns the past,' can leverage significant power" (13). Natives typically argued that scholars, when writing about Indians, had forgotten oral traditions and distinct "Indian" perspectives. On the other hand, scholars had increasingly dismissed Native views and instead focused primarily

Copyright of American Indian Quarterly is the property of University of Nebraska Press. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. 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.