

UCLA

American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah. By R. Warren Metcalf.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2n2675q5>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 27(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

Author

Clemmer, Richard O.

Publication Date

2003-06-01

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/>

lands" (p. xv). To a limited extent, he succeeded. However, in failing to explore as deeply as he might have the implications of his own evidence, Beck has overlooked many of the nuances and subtleties of his subject, and missed an opportunity to write a monograph of significant creativity and value.

Michael Leroy Oberg

State University of New York–Geneseo

Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah. By R. Warren Metcalf. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 243 pages. \$55.00 cloth.

Metcalf modifies Donald Fixico's thesis in *Termination and Relocation* (University of New Mexico Press, 1986) that termination was an attempt to revive assimilationist policies and Kenneth Philp's argument in *Termination Revisited* (University of Nebraska Press, 1999) that termination was a reaction against the Indian Reorganization Act. Metcalf convincingly argues that the way termination played out in Utah resulted directly from the Indian Claims Commission's proceedings; the coincidental accession of Arthur Watkins to the chairship of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs; and Watkins', Wilkinson's, and Boyden's Mormonism. The author uses interviews, as well as the recently released papers of John Boyden at the University of Utah and the papers of Arthur Watkins and Ernest Wilkinson at Brigham Young University, as well as other archival and published sources

Ernest Wilkinson had stumbled onto Indian claims cases in the 1930s, and his appearance before Congress in 1945 to lobby for passage of the Indian Claims Commission Act resulted directly from his pique at having the Supreme Court reject his arduously reasoned argument on behalf of the Northwestern Shoshone. In the termination decade of the 1950s, he became increasingly skeptical about termination, especially after the Association on Indian Affairs headed by longtime activist Oliver La Farge issued a blistering denunciation of the program. Wilkinson even expressed his doubts to the president of the Mormon Church. However, he never publicly voiced his opposition because in the tight-knit circles connecting Washington Mormons with Utah Mormons, he would not gainsay the powerful and respected Senator Watkins

Watkins was the junior senator from Utah in 1946 when he took the chairship of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs simply because no one else wanted the job. He had neither previously interest in nor knowledge of Native Americans. He also did not create the idea of termination. That idea, paradoxically, came from Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Zimmermann, a New Dealer left over from the days of John Collier and the Indian Reorganization Act. When forced to tell the Senate Civil Service Committee exactly how the Bureau of Indian Affairs would cut staff and economize, Zimmermann could think of nothing except to withdraw services from some tribes to avoid a general hamstringing reduction in funds that would torpedo economic development programs on other reservations. Zimmermann proposed an approach to identify tribes in three categories:

(1) those that could be immediately terminated; (2) those to be prepared for termination within ten years; and (3) those requiring more than ten years of preparation. The Paiute and Ute of Utah fell into this third category.

When Watkins heard the plan he endorsed it enthusiastically and eventually pushed the notorious termination resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 108, through the Senate. But Watkins only became invested in the termination ideology when he perceived Reva Bosone, a liberal Democrat, representative from Utah, intruding onto his turf by crafting the original termination resolution. Once Watkins took command, he would show the world by shifting “his” Indians from category #3 to category #1: the Utah Ute and Paiute would be terminated immediately.

But there were a number of complicating factors, such as a favorable decision in a claims case argued by Ernest Wilkinson on behalf of the Umcompahgre and White River Utes for land taken and never compensated. The Umcompahgres and White Rivers had been forcibly relocated from Colorado and placed on an expanded Uintah reservation in Utah in 1880. As a result of the IRA, the three bands—Uintah, Uncompahgre, and White River—had been united into a single “tribe” holding reservation land and assets in common, and administering them through a “Business Committee.” Due to this tribal arrangement, the claims monies for the Umcompahgre and White River would be shared with the Uintah. But many, perhaps most, Uncompahgres objected to sharing the claims monies for land they had lost with the Uintahs.

Complicating factor number two was that Watkins pressured the Bureau to prepare long-range economic development plans that would include termination for tribes in categories #1 and #2. The Ute Tribe Business Committee logically planned to use the claims monies in their long-range plan. However, a third complicating factor was the fact that quick infusions of cash among tribes that had never had money before was bound to put a sudden economic premium on tribal membership. The tribe enacted a blood quantum provision for tribal membership, requiring that henceforth, tribal membership would be restricted to those who were one-half or more Utah Ute “blood.” The so-called “mixed bloods,” who were mostly Uintah, saw their descendants as being disinherited. They favored direct distribution of the claims monies.

The inevitable wrangling among mixed-blood Uintah, full-blood Umcompahgre, and White Rivers exacerbated factionalism and triggered the rise of political leadership in response to these issues. This constituted the fourth complicating factor. Development of the long-range plan stalled. The BIA sent Robert Bennett, a young Oneida Indian from its program department, to the Uintah-Ouray to iron things out. Ironically, Bennett would later become the first Native American Commissioner of Indian Affairs in ninety-seven years under appointment by Lyndon Johnson, and would help to wrest away legal representation of Native Americans from non-Indians such as Boyden and Wilkinson by creating the first American Indian law program at the University of New Mexico.

But in 1954 Bennett did not have the perspective he would later develop. Then, he was driven by his current task: how to salvage the Utes’ long-range plan. At an emergency conference called hastily by the National Congress of

American Indians to organize and implement opposition to termination, Bennett met with the two principal Ute players in the political game and proposed a solution: The “mixed bloods” would receive per capita payments from the claims settlement and be terminated from the tribal role. The “more-than-half-bloods” constituting the Ute tribe would push ahead with the long-range plan and would drop to category #2.

Essentially, the mixed bloods were sacrificed to “save” the full-bloods. By this time Ernest Wilkinson was heavily involved in claims cases and turned the Utes over to junior partner John Boyden, who had made the final winning arguments in the “Big Ute” claims case. Boyden engineered what can only be described as a duplicitous, self-serving final solution. He arranged for tribal assets to be divided and for the mixed-blood assets to be placed in the hands of three corporations. Although the Ute tribe, in general council, ostensibly approved the solution, Metcalf musters enough evidence to cast doubt on the assumption that the vote represented informed consent. Most of the Utes—full blood and mixed blood alike—were confused, ill-informed, and unclear about the solution and about just what they were voting on. Nonetheless, Boyden pushed ahead. In a now familiar pattern, Boyden, who has been revealed in a blatant conflict of interest through representing Peabody Coal Company, as well as oil companies, at the same time he was representing the Hopi tribe as legal counsel, took it upon himself to represent both the mixed bloods and the full bloods even though, by terms of the solution, these two groups had diametrically opposed interests. The final result was that not only were the mixed bloods terminated, but the majority, in the throes of grinding poverty, eventually sold their shares in the corporations, some to the Ute tribe and others to non-Indians. First Security Bank and its Mormon directors (p. 202) “flaunted the legal safeguards” in “unparalleled fraud and malfeasance,” selling the shares in the remaining corporation for a few hundred dollars apiece, “and often a used automobile,” to non-Indians. When oil and gas revenues and monies from a second successful claims case came up for distribution, these non-Indians got the money because they held the shares.

Weaving discussions of ethnicity and ethnic identity, as well as the European-derived concepts of bloodlines and the absurdities of tribal recognition procedures, Metcalf offers a devastating critique of U.S. Indian policy and how it can be manipulated by a small number of powerful people using “blackmail tactics” (pp. 236–7). He shows that all the terminated Utes had between one- and sixteen-sixteenths of Ute ancestry, and that barely more than half had one-half or more Ute “blood.” He points out that the terminationists, even if they had some degree of vision, focused on their own narrow concepts of a society of isolated individuals and had no concept of collectivities with legal and political rights guaranteed by treaty. Metcalf has done an excellent job of pointing the way for future historians who want to unravel what often appear to be unfathomable complexities and products of historical inertia in U.S. Indian policy.

Voices from the Trail of Tears. By Vicki Rozema. Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 2003. 240 pages. \$11.95 paper.

Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears have been interesting topics for many years. The past decades have seen a continued flow of relevant material on this subject from the popular (Ehle, *Trail of Tears*), to the scholarly (Anderson, *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*), to the documentary (Perdue and Green, *Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*), to the debunkers (Duffield, "Cherokee Emigration Reconstructing Reality," in *Chronicles of Oklahoma* LXXX). Rozema's volume, which falls into the documentary category, primarily deals with the period from 1828 to 1839. She covers events leading to the passage of the Indian Removal bill, the division among the Cherokees supporting and opposing removal, life in the stockades, the various water and land emigration routes, the saga of Tsali, and the death and misery that accompanied the whole process of removal.

Although most of the surviving accounts come from whites, the author has attempted to include a number of documents written by Cherokees. Using letters, records, and journal excerpts, she allows the reader to experience the events through the eyes of missionaries, the doctors who tended the sick, the soldiers in charge, and the Cherokees themselves.

The book is both well organized and well documented. The author has chosen an excellent selection of documents that will make this work a welcome and useful addition to the literature of the Trail of Tears.

William L. Anderson

Western Carolina University

Worship and Wilderness: Culture, Religion, and Law in Public Lands Management. By Lloyd Burton. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. 341 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper.

Lloyd Burton's *Worship and Wilderness: Culture, Religion, and Law in Public Lands Management* conveys a highly original account of how culture, spirituality, and law have impacted public lands management in the United States. Drawing on several specific case studies of conflicts over the use of and claims on sacred sites and religious practices, Burton successfully articulates how the spiritual, recreational, scientific, and resource-extractive interests of American Indian tribes and dominant Euro-American groups influence land management within existing legal and constitutional frameworks. The review of government management decisions in sacred site disputes reflects the politics of the relationship between the religious clauses implicated in the First Amendment and the federal trust responsibility for tribal nations.

By explicating the possibilities of "cultural coevolution," this study suggests a positive direction toward a better future for both indigenous and non-indigenous groups through the practical development of mutually accommodating and cooperative management of public lands. The work provides useful