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Take My Land, Take My Life: The Story of Congress's Historic Settlement of Alaska Native Land Claims, 1960-1971. By Donald Craig Mitchell.

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especially those issued by commercial galleries, are often unreliable sources of scholarship. Written as public relations for galleries (and sometimes museums), they are not subject to the rigors of the scholarly referee process and may, thus, express ideas that are not commonly accepted by scholars in the field.

Although there is very little scholarship on Navajo textiles that is informed by recent theoretical discourse, there is a wealth of general literature on Navajo weaving. The literature on the trading post system is much less extensive. The classic source is Frank McNitt's *The Indian Traders* (1962). Willow Roberts Powers' *Navajo Trading: The End of an Era* (2001) is a more recent source on the topic. Powers presents a viewpoint quite different from M'Closkey's. Funded by the United Indian Traders Association (UITA), a non-profit organization originally formed in 1931 to assist traders in legal disputes and marketing matters, Powers' study serves as an argument in defense of the trading post system. Despite its funding source, it does retain a degree of objectivity and thoroughness that M'Closkey's study lacks. Powers gives a detailed accounting of the rationale and actions of the DNA (Navajo) People's Legal Services, the legal defense association that was instrumental in outlawing questionable trading practices on the Navajo Reservation. M'Closkey, on the other hand, does not seem to feel obligated to present the opposing views that would result in a more balanced scholarly study.

M'Closkey claims that her approach is different because, as "a communications perspective," it is based on the premise that "a phenomenon can be known only in context" (p. 17). She contends that we cannot separate a Navajo weaving from its context if we are to discern its full meaning and significance. This is undoubtedly the case. A fuller explication of her methodology—what she describes as "a communications perspective"—would be helpful. It would allow the reader to more easily discern the theoretical foundations of her argument. In the end, the fundamental problem with this study is that it focuses on "evidence" of exploitation. Rather than analyzing the complex social and cultural interactions and contexts—both Native and non-Native—that have worked to produce such exploitation, M'Closkey focuses on the *effects* of such exploitation. As a result, her analysis lacks depth, coherence, and relevance.

### Jennifer McLerran

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**Take My Land, Take My Life: The Story of Congress's Historic Settlement of Alaska Native Land Claims, 1960–1971.** By Donald Craig Mitchell. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2001. 679 pages. \$29.95 paper.

Don Mitchell's *Take My Land, Take My Life* is the second part of a two-volume history of relations between Alaska Natives and American "visitors" from the Treaty of Cession in 1867 to the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971. The first volume, *Sold American: The Story of Alaska Natives and Their Land, 1867–1959*, is a history of Native life in the territory of

Alaska from the purchase of Russian claims in 1867 to the achievement of statehood in 1959. *Take My Land, Take My Life* continues the story through the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971, which the author calls “the most generous and innovative aboriginal claims settlement in U.S. history.”

Several themes running through *Take My Land, Take My Life* are important in understanding Mitchell’s interpretation of Native claims in Alaska. First is the insistence that the colonial history of Alaska is distinctive and sets Natives apart from other aboriginal peoples in the United States. *Sold American* is essentially a testament to this reasoning. Alaska Natives, for example, were never forcibly removed from their land and crowded onto reservations. They therefore were able to play an active part in the territory’s commercial economy as fishers, whalers, laborers, and guides. Employment, for the author, is an important assimilative experience that leads to preferences for both western goods and western institutions. Further, through missionary schools some Native individuals acquired the skills and the language that enabled them to effectively organize their communities, gain the right to vote, elect their own leaders to the legislature, and eventually fight for their land rights. The author then uses this “distinctive history” to question and sometimes denigrate the counsel of policy makers like John Collier whose views of Indian societies were “utopian” or Felix Cohen’s hopeless romanticism and “rose-colored picture of Indians.”

*Take My Land, Take My Life* continues this critique of misinformed individuals meddling in the affairs of Alaska Natives in a discussion of Project Chariot, a milestone of the Native claims movement. Project Chariot refers to the plan of Edward Teller, the father of the hydrogen bomb, to create a deep-water port by detonating underwater thermonuclear devices near the Inupiat village of Point Hope, on the coast of northwestern Alaska. The concerns over Teller’s project led to a request by David Frankson, the president of the village council in Point Hope (on the advice of the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ [BIA] area director), for assistance from the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA). According to Mitchell, the AAIA had an agenda of federal trusteeship and reservations that was utterly out of line with Native thinking and Alaska history. Mitchell, however, does credit AAIA leaders with organizing the Conference on Native Rights in Barrow in 1961 which led to the recognition that Congress and the US Department of the Interior had important responsibilities with regard to the protection of aboriginal lands and a call for public land withdrawals around Native villages. He also suggests that the general counsel of the AAIA and the Alaska director of the BIA convinced Stewart Udall, the Interior secretary to impose a freeze on the selection of lands by the state. This becomes an important incentive in the eventual settlement of the conflict over lands and compensation.

At this point, another theme emerges, the peripheral involvement of Native people in the claims movement. Mitchell begins the first chapter with a conclusive statement from his earlier work: “Between the Alaska purchase in 1867 and Alaska statehood in 1959, rather than defending their own interests Alaska Natives depended for the safeguarding of their land rights largely

upon sympathetic non-Natives.” A final theme in both *Sold America* and *Take My Land* is based on the value of consumerism and self-interest and the irrelevance of the precontact Native world that is described in Hobbesian terms as “cold, harsh, and short.” Today, aboriginal culture is a hindrance to an improved living standard. For example, in explaining poverty in Tyonek, a small village near Anchorage, Mitchell argues that poverty there is “no different from other villages in which Alaska Natives found themselves trapped between a subsistence hunting and fishing economy that no longer produced a psychologically satisfying material culture and a white cash economy” (p. 68). The solution, according to the author, is instilling in Indians “an addiction to the goods to which whites are addicted” which will then attach “them to us by the strongest of all ties, interest” (*Sold American*, p. 18). Therefore, for the author, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act “may be the first fair test of Washington’s theory that economic assimilation will alter Native American attitudes to non-Native advantage” (*Sold American*, p. 21). Individualism and private enterprise will also grant Alaska Natives more opportunity for independence and full participation in the life of modern society and avoid the constraints of reservations, trusteeship, and BIA paternalism. These values are already prevalent, for Natives are “as interested as any other human beings in making money” (p. 238) and will, if given the chance, enthusiastically exploit their lands and their resources.

*Take My Land, Take My Life* then becomes an historical biography of individuals who contributed to a settlement that embodied what Natives wanted and what they needed. Though Native leaders were not as influential as “contemporary Native legend” would have it, their actions did have some effect on strategy and the terms of the settlement.

Non-Natives involved in the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement act can be roughly divided into those who directly affected the lobbying effort and the content of the legislation, and those who brokered the settlement. In the first group were attorneys and congressional staffers who helped finance Native conference and organizational activities, enabled aboriginal leaders to gain access to the corridors of power in Congress and the White House, and recommended specific provisions of ANCSA that authorized state-chartered corporations to receive the monies and land, state sharing of royalties, and national interest land withdrawals.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed into law in December 1971. The act provided for compensation payments of approximately \$962 million dollars and the conveyance of 44 million acres of land to village and regional corporations. The regions were given significant responsibilities over the distribution of money, the control of subsurface resources, and economic development. Villages were expected to use and manage their lands and support local commercial activities. While Mitchell and many others were impressed with the generosity and foresight of Congress, others were more skeptical. In the words of two leaders from the Barrow in a letter to President Nixon: “Although this is a settlement of our land rights the State of Alaska comes first, the federal government comes first, the third parties who have federal and state leases on our land come first.... We have been denied our

lands, the value of our lands, the opportunity to form an economic basis and our culture is being banished to the eternal night of the Arctic Slope.”

The first part of this letter to the president alludes to the obvious point that the primary beneficiaries of ANCSA were not the Natives of Alaska but the energy companies who received right of way permits to build a TransAlaskan pipeline that has generated billions of dollars in profits; the state of Alaska that now freely owns 104 million acres of land and has derived tens of billions in revenue from royalties and taxes; and the conservationists and federal government that were able to add over 103 million acres of land to the national systems of parks, refuges, and forests. The reference in the last sentence of the letter to Nixon to the banishment of Inupiat culture (and presumably other Native cultures) is a less evident issue and one that is contorted in *Take My Land, Take My Life*.

In Mitchell's portrayal of the Native claims movement aboriginal culture is not only fading, it is largely irrelevant. The evidence for cultural decline? The preference for modern technology and goods like refrigerators, rifles, aluminum boats, interior plumbing, oil furnaces, snow machines, and so on. The adoption of tools and implements is hardly an indication of the decline or disappearance of Native culture. Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering, or what Natives refer to as their way of life, was in 1971 and is today an integral part of Native existence. The average person in rural areas consumes 375 pounds of wild foods a year. In the interior and the arctic the averages are twice as high. Subsistence resources are also used for clothing, transportation, heating, housing, and arts and crafts. Traditional values of sharing, cooperation, reciprocity, respect for elders, spirituality, and consensual decision-making continue. Though aboriginal languages are in decline in some communities, they are vibrant in others, particularly among Yupik speakers in southwestern Alaska. Customary rules guide the distribution and consumption of subsistence foods. Many Natives consider themselves first and foremost hunters and fishers. There is evidence too that subsistence economies are not only resilient, but also growing in some villages.

What is central to Mitchell's analysis is the value of a market economy based on self-aggrandizement, private property, and profit-driven corporations. He concludes his work with an endorsement of ANCSA and indictment of the act's critics. "Whoever leads it, a discussion about the future of Native villages in the twenty-first century must begin by acknowledging that ANCSA was not, as its most vocal critics within the Native community now charge, a scheme hatched by a malevolent Congress to steal Native land and destroy traditional Native cultures by requiring Alaska Natives to organize corporations. Rather, as the story of Alaska Natives and their land that has been told in this and the companion volume documents, ANCSA was an unprecedented experiment in Native American economic self-determination that Alaska Natives actively participated in crafting" (p. 541). Unquestionably, the twelve Native regional corporations have become a vital force in Alaska. Their activities encompass oil and gas services, tourism, catering, investments, real estate (in and out of the state), timber harvesting, construction, and government contracting. These firms could benefit individual Natives through employ-

ment and the distribution of dividends. With a few exceptions neither have been realized. Of the more than 13,000 employed by the regions only 13 percent are Native shareholders. The 180 village corporations make even fewer opportunities available. Whatever work they offer represents only 15 percent of what is needed. The impact of dividends, especially on rural incomes, has been limited. Between 1995 and 1997, the average annual dividend payment of the ten corporations that represent rural areas in Alaska (excluding Sealaska [Juneau] and Cook Inlet, Inc. [Anchorage]) was \$486. Even Mitchell admits that ANCSA “has done little to alleviate the economic and social problems that are pandemic to Native villages” (p. 504).

What is missing in Mitchell’s work is a substantive discussion of Native governments. In his concluding observation in the paragraph above he maintains, “Alaska Natives actively participated in crafting” the claims act. This is partially true for there were dozens of individual Natives who worked hard for settlement. What is overlooked, though, are the Traditional and Indian Reorganization Act tribal councils that actually represented Native peoples. Mitchell dismisses them after explaining Secretary of the Interior Udall’s decision to consult with Native leaders: “In August 1966 the assumption that Alaska’s 50,000 Native residents were organized enough to have leaders empowered to negotiate ‘consensus legislation’ was a fiction” (p. 113). The presumption is either that the leaders did not exist or did not have the authority to represent the people they served. Where is the evidence for this assertion? Later, the author claims that because of “poor communication and limited technology villagers could not be kept abreast of the debate and terms of a claims settlement” (p. 487). One can imagine their response when they discovered that they had given up their rights to hunt and fish and most of their lands. Thus, the idea that tribal governments should play an important role in negotiations over their lands and that they could play an integral part in the future of Native village is completely lost in *Take My Land, Take My Life*. To suggest otherwise, the author contends, is to “retreat into a local cultural past” with “the end result ... to be disastrously left behind by the rest of the world” (p. 505).

There is much to question in Mitchell’s analysis of Alaska Native lands and claims: his casual acceptance of American military might and missionary interpretation; his over-reliance on discriminatory doctrines like the unlimited power of Congress; or mischievous legal decisions that permitted the confiscation of aboriginal lands without procedural protections or fair compensation (*Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v. United States*). There are also the unsubstantiated propositions that ANCSA is the right policy for those who had little to do with its creation; or that economic development can proceed without viable tribal organizations; or that state-chartered corporations and governments are the preferred means to achieve what Alaska Natives desire.

These comments are not meant to disparage the impressive amount of thought and research that has gone into both *Sold America* and *Take My Land, Take My Life*. Both volumes provide a treasure of information about the history of Native relations with non-Natives, the inner workings of the political process in Alaska and Washington, D.C., the issues that surrounded ANCSA

and other important legislation, and valuable background to recent controversies over tribal sovereignty and subsistence. There is added insight in his work because of his experience as an executive and lobbyist with the Alaska Federation of Natives and as a practicing attorney. The current book under review and his extensive writings on public policy and the law are must reading for any serious student of the affairs and history of Alaska Natives.

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**The Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540–1760.** Edited by Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2002. 369 pages. \$50.00 cloth.

With a blossoming of new research in ethnohistory, linguistics, archaeology, folklore, and literary studies, recent years have seen a reawakening of scholarship focused on the Native peoples of southeastern North America. This new collection of essays, edited by Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson, profits from and consolidates much of this work, particularly ongoing collaborations between archaeologists and historians seeking to better understand the social transformations experienced by Natives and newcomers during the region's colonial era.

The papers gathered in this collection derive principally from the 1998 Porter L. Fortune, Jr., History Symposium held at the University of Mississippi. All of the contributions focus on the sociopolitical reorganization of southeastern Indian societies in the wake of European contact. More than a random assemblage of essays, the volume is coherently organized on the basis of geographic subregions. One or more authors examine each corner of the southeastern region, and influences from beyond and within its subareas are given close consideration. The papers also share thematic and topical concerns, at the core of which are issues of Native response to the sweeping demographic, economic, and political changes triggered by French, English, and Spanish exploration and colonization of eastern North America. The papers thus provide useful and comparable overviews of social transformations within these regions. The volume builds upon and compliments the monographic works of the symposium participants and on several earlier collections treating related themes, especially Hudson and Carmen Tesser's *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South 1521–1704* (1994).

The volume is a useful and interesting contribution to interdisciplinary Native American studies. The authors particularly integrate the findings of archaeological and ethnohistorical research, but many also derive insights from demography, historical linguistics, biological sciences, and other fields. All of the contributors provide valuable assessments of current knowledge of the region, but some papers are especially interesting. By mentioning them, I hope to suggest the richness of the volume as a whole.

Penelope Drooker examines the Ohio Valley with an eye toward understanding the precontact to historic transition in a region where this question