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American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home. By Thomas A. Britten.

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...," p. 13), but once one enters the flow of the narratives, this is rarely a serious rub.

The overall strength of this book lies in the detailed and evocative descriptions that the elders provide. At many points, the reader is transported to a place of wonder, where nonhuman persons signaled their presence at a masked dance with a thunderous response from under the ground echoing the stamping of the people in the ceremonial house above them. One can feel the terror of a child, now an elder, who watched bare-chested, wolf-masked dancers fighting with each other viciously, covered with blood, and then miraculously emerging unscathed. One elder witnessed an appendectomy performed with a bird's wing feather; another described how she found a transparent egg that her grandmother and other female relatives inspected in awe, telling her that it was a child of Ella (the sky, universe, awareness) which had dropped from the sky. Others tell of the joyous ceremonial distributions that accompanied a child's first catch or completion of an important task. And throughout are woven traditional stories that illuminate basic Yup'ik understandings of the world, and thoughts about the spiritual and social changes that challenge people today.

In short, particularly in combination with other published sources and especially with *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks, Our Way of Making Prayer* offers a unique glimpse at the words and worlds of a generation of Yup'ik people who are, with good reason, widely revered.

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American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home. By Thomas A. Britten. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 253 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home recounts the participation of American Indian soldiers in World War I as uninformed participants in assimilationist policies directed from the federal government toward the "Indian problem." Thomas Britten also emphasizes the federal government's utilization of Indian scouts in military forces and the immense wartime support from Indians at home. Also covered are the after-effects of American Indian participation in the Great War through decisions made by the federal government to benefit and assimilate Indians

into the larger American society. Britten unearthed many examples of overt racism employed by the federal government, the military, the media, and the public. The propaganda conducted from these sources during the great conflict, ostensibly on behalf of and for the benefit of American Indians, served to place Indians in crucially dangerous positions, for instance, as infantry scouts in "no man's land," or to make them caricatures of a Plains warrior.

One major question examined in *American Indians in World War I* was the induction of noncitizen American Indians into military service. More than one-third of the noncitizen Indians in America were drafted, which inevitably created complications with future Indian policy in the United States. Dilemmas arose among the draftees upon this specific issue and eventually the Bureau of Indian Affairs attempted to handle the situation. BIA officials in charge of the selective-service process on Indian reservations and in Indian country brushed the question of citizenship aside and ignored the dilemma. The BIA soon realized that the problem of enfranchisement would affect other American Indians still in the United States, and so the BIA returned the noncitizen Indian question back to the draft boards on Indian land. Uninformed about how to deal with Indian issues properly, they subsequently created a hodgepodge of decisions regulating how Indians were drafted into the military. The unfamiliarity with Indian citizenship and the inferior methods implemented to draft them for World War I purposes later came back to haunt the federal government. The federal government reacted quickly and pushed through several new and, it felt, favorable policy decisions toward American Indians.

Britten found that many Indians inducted into the military did not fully comprehend the reality of their contracts during World War I. The military conflict with a German army across an ocean in a foreign country was an experience many veterans recalled they did not fully conceive of when they signed up for the European war. *American Indians in World War I* points out that some veterans believed the draft registration was meant only as a requirement to show up, register, and return home the same day. Unfortunately, many found themselves shipped off for basic training at distant military bases and eventually sent by boat to the European front.

Especially notable in the book is the documentation of the assistance and support from American Indian families that remained at home during World War I. Women volunteered to work in mainstream relief agencies such as the Red Cross and

knitted socks, mittens, and scarves for front-line soldiers. Britten also discloses that American Indians pledged tremendous amounts of money in the national Liberty war bond drives. Approximately thirteen million dollars in bonds were raised by Indian people in Indian country during several large-scale World War I liberty bond drives. Even though American Indians raised funds for the soldiers in the spirit of patriotism and the war effort, the BIA used these bond drives for an alternative motive. The BIA felt that the success of the bond drives as another method of assimilation would eventually encourage Indians to learn to save money and become good citizens.

Although some wartime events were used to gain access to Indian lands, Britten found that some benefits did result that aided Indians in America. One of the most notable benefits was the Snyder Act of 1919 after World War I, which provided much-needed funds for housing and building on Indian land and eventually bestowed citizenship rights on all American Indians. Unfortunately, one eventual outcome of the Snyder Act was the transference of many Indian issues to state jurisdiction and thus less guidance or involvement from the federal government in Indian policy.

Although unusual, Britten noted that the United States government was not the first bureaucratic entity to provide citizenship to returning Indian veterans. Quite a few U.S. veteran groups from various local communities voted to embrace Indian veterans in their communities as local citizens. However, these communities believed that a World War I Indian veteran granted citizenship in the local society would not be greatly affected by this since the federal government still exercised guardian rights in all Indian affairs.

While the majority of the book is devoted to information about the wartime participation of American Indians in World War I, Britten also examines the experiences of other minority groups during this era. Briefly covered are the experiences of African Americans, Africans, and Mexican Americans. Their wartime service was markedly different from that of the American Indians, most obviously in the military's policy of segregating minorities in the service. Yet these groups responded greatly to the call to enlist, serve, and fight during the conflict. Britten also uncovered the many successes and contributions American Indians singularly brought to the European battles during the war. Precursors of the Navajo code talkers in World War I were the Choctaw, Kiowa, and Comanche. These groups

provided an essential service in the transmission of coded messages between Allied troops, utilizing traditional languages that the Germans could not break. Many servicemen performed historic acts of bravery in the line of duty, acts that are now receiving recognition in this book.

The information detailed in this work is good, but more personal anecdotes from the American Indian veterans themselves could be included. Voices from federal officials, senators, politicians, military officials, and other spokespersons constitute the majority of the record, yet despite the shortage of firsthand input from Indian veterans, this book remains immensely interesting. The Indian voices heard in the book contribute to and convince the reader of the positive experiences many Indians had in the military service. They also record the disappointment some veterans felt after they returned to the United States and found their life situation remaining pretty much the same as before they left. Unfortunately a subject rarely investigated in many twentieth-century historical accounts, this book contributes much information about the experiences of American Indian soldiers prior to and during World War I. It offers a straightforward examination not only of how World War I affected the American Indian as inductees in the military, but the after-effects of citizenship and the reestablishment of warrior honor through the veteran war experience. Several legal questions are outlined in regard to the involvement of noncitizen Indians during World War I, and the induction of noncitizens into the U.S. armed forces brings up questions of enfranchisement and recognition that still have not properly been dealt with by the federal government.

Any student of early twentieth-century history will find this book immensely informative, both as a description of the American Indian experience in World War I and as an early outline of federal Indian policy and future issues affected by the "Great War." Although American Indians fought, suffered, and gave their lives equally as other servicemen in the Great War, they returned to America to find that the ideals and values they fought for again did not apply to them. For most American Indians, the catalyst of World War I provided a first-time contact with the outside world. It brought a taste of the outside world from soldiers, women, and children to the Indian experience. This conflict presaged things to come for the next generation of Indians in America.

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