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Chiefs, Agents & Soldiers: Conflict on the Navajo Frontier, 1868-1882. By William Haas Moore

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The full word for "moon" in Chickasaw is given as *hashi ninak aa*, which literally would mean "the sun that goes at night." There are a number of other clarifications that could be made, but these are of interest only to the specialist.

Munro has a fascination with the grammatical workings of Chickasaw not unlike that of a clockmaker with the workings of an intricate clock. However, the author shares with the clockmaker a certain indifference to the aesthetics of the object of her fascination. The vast majority of Chickasaw sentences used as examples merely illustrate the grammatical operations of the language. Sometimes, sententially meaningless items are included ("I burned up with you."). The sentences are also populated with Munro's students, colleagues, and family. It may be amusing for the cognoscenti to identify as many as possible, but one regrets the lack of examples that come out of a Chickasaw cultural context.

Finally, some useful information appears on the inside of the book jacket that does not occur in the body of the work. When this book is ordered for library use, the inside parts of the book jacket should be tipped into the book as it is catalogued.

Geoffrey Kimball
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Chiefs, Agents & Soldiers: Conflict on the Navajo Frontier, 1868–1882. By William Haas Moore. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. 355 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Historical considerations of the Navajo are as numerous as those dealing with any other American Indian group. Historians such as Garrick and Roberta Bailey, Donald Parman, and Peter Iverson have dealt extensively with Navajo history, including the tragic "Long Walk" to the Bosque Redondo in eastern New Mexico in 1864 and the twentieth-century efforts to establish the Navajo Nation. Still, William Haas Moore has demonstrated that even the most frequently studied groups have crucial periods or topics in their history that have been neglected by historians. In *Chiefs, Agents & Soldiers*, Moore deals with the decades between the famous "Long Walk" and the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, he focuses on the early reservation years after the Navajo were allowed to return to their homeland in 1868. These years are significant, because they encompass the period immedi-

ately following military conquest in which the federal government and the Diné themselves reestablished an enduring homeland for the Navajo people. The period following military subjugation is key to the study of all tribal groups, says Moore, because it offers answers to questions about the ways Indian peoples reacted after suffering defeat—whether they assimilated quickly or resisted, whether they emerged as powerful nations or dissolved as tribal entities.

The design of this book is very traditional in its adherence to the use of agency records and a narrative framework, but Moore's message is fresh and insightful. Rather than presenting the image of the "vanishing Indian" common to considerations of the late nineteenth century, he argues that the Navajo were able to play an active and successful role in adapting to change, while preserving their "traditional core." Through strong tribal leadership and functional alliances with cooperative military officers, traders, and some agents, the Navajo became stronger politically, socially, and economically. In doing so, they demonstrated that American Indians could exercise control over their situation soon after suffering military defeat, even in an era marked by the tragedies of the Indian wars, Wounded Knee, and the Ghost Dance.

The narrative begins with a familiar description of General James Carleton's efforts to dispossess the Diné and resettle them near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. With the help of Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson, the military succeeded in rounding up more than eight thousand Navajo and sending them on the "Long Walk" to their new reservation. Moore then looks at the years of exile between 1864 and 1868, during which the Diné tried to adapt to the miserable conditions on the Bosque Redondo. Despite the desperate situation, he argues, the Navajo were able to manage by adopting useful skills, while resisting new phenomena they considered useless, such as adobe homes and Catholicism. This ability to adapt while preserving their autonomy and traditions would also be characteristic of later years.

Moore has chosen a very fitting title for this book, because the bulk of it concentrates on the rise of central tribal leadership and the shifting attitudes of various military officers and agents assigned to the Navajo Reservation. He argues that the chiefs were key players in Navajo politics rather than figureheads appointed by the agents. Barboncito, Manuelito, Ganado Mucho, and Henry Chee Dodge all acted as mediators between the Diné and their American Indian and non-Indian neighbors. Whether

negotiating peace with Mormon settlements or discouraging raiding in times of economic stress, the Navajo chiefs served their people well, while simultaneously promoting their personal prestige and wealth. The military officers and certain agents found the already-established chiefs to be welcome allies in their efforts to avoid conflicts between the Navajo and other groups.

The military officers focused on maintaining peace on the reservation and solving immediate problems related to the Navajo's material well-being rather than on the ideological changes laid out by reformers, missionaries, and federal policy. The military lacked enthusiasm for cultural reform, because the Diné proved able to moderate their own disputes and succeed economically, and the military feared direct conflict with such a numerous and determined people. To ensure good relations, the officers at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, and even those of higher ranks, such as General William T. Sherman, were willing to let the Diné live a pastoral life that oftentimes took them beyond reservation boundaries. The first agents were military men like Frank Tracy Bennett, who may not have completely understood the Navajo political structure but allowed influential tribal leaders to resolve problems of theft themselves, instead of resorting to military punishment. The resulting trust between the Navajo and the officers convinced tribal leaders that the military could, in turn, serve them well as mediators in internal disputes.

Whereas Moore's assessments of the military officers and chiefs are generally quite positive, he depicts the civilian agents who came to the reservation under authority of President Grant's Peace Policy in the 1870s as a disruptive force in Navajo-Anglo relations. Most of these men attained their positions under the authority of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, which had been assigned the reservation according to the Peace Policy. That policy trusted the administration of Indian affairs to missionary groups, who were deemed better adapted to "civilize" the Native Americans. As a result, the civilian agents were less enthusiastic about Navajo self-government and often emphasized cultural reform over material issues. These agents insisted that the Navajo remain within reservation boundaries and proved less willing to compromise with the tribal leaders. Many of them, such as William F.M. Army, were also corrupt and incompetent, which exacerbated hard feelings between them and their charges. Although Galen Eastman and other civilian agents varied in their degree of emphasis on cultural reform, many placed a heavy

stress on education. The author admits that some Navajo, including the militant leader Manuelito, favored boarding schools for their children, but most did not. Moore argues that the Peace Policy and its reform program failed in its efforts to convert many Navajo to the Presbyterian faith and to overcome the force of Diné tradition.

The only civilian agent emerging from this work in a positive light is trader Thomas Keam. Like the military officers, Keam focused on keeping the Navajo out of war and on improving their material condition. Unfortunately for him, his cohabitation with a Diné woman offended the Presbyterian Board and led to his dismissal in 1873 after he had served only a short stint as agent. Even after dismissal, Keam continued as an advocate of Navajo rights and an advisor to the tribal leaders. Traders such as Keam and John Lorenzo Hubbell worked well with both the officers and the chiefs and were frequently critical of civilian agents. Perhaps Moore makes too many generalizations about the traders' sympathy for the Navajo situation without clearly explaining their personal interests, but he has demonstrated that they were indeed an important force in American Indian life in the early years after reservations were established.

Moore has put together an extensively researched and valuable addition to Navajo scholarship. At points, however, the book becomes bogged down in details derived from agency reports. His assessment of the seemingly endless parade of agents and numerous accounts of incidents occurring between Navajo herders and Mormon settlers is well done but a bit tiresome. This could be a symptom of the lack of historical consideration of this period and the temptation to document all of that which has not previously been documented in a historical text. Also, it is peculiar that so little attention is paid to the Presbyterian policies, given their strong influence on Navajo-Anglo relations during this period. It is too tempting to paint the Presbyterians as stubborn and naive without looking at their own explanations for the failings of their program. If sources are available dealing with the Foreign Mission Board and church policy, they could be a valuable supplement.

But the shortcomings are few compared to the strengths of this work. Moore offers intriguing interpretations of numerous aspects of reservation political and social life, including the rise of Navajo leadership and even the social significance of witchcraft within Diné society. His argument that the rise in violence sur-

rounding accusations of witchcraft can be attributed to the tension of Diné society and the gap between rich and poor will be of interest to those studying Navajo social relationships in any era. His analysis of the weave of relationships within Navajo and non-Indian societies and between those groups is skillfully done and will shed light on such relationships in other regions during the late nineteenth century. More importantly, he has succeeded in showing us that the early reservation period should be considered a very dynamic and even partially optimistic period of American Indian history, at least in the Navajo case. Instead of "vanishing," the Diné took advantage of military fears of conflict and the traders' sympathy to advance their own condition and lay the groundwork for the Navajo Nation of the next century.

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Dancing on Common Ground: Tribal Cultures and Alliances on the Southern Plains. By Howard Meredith. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. 218 pages. \$29.95 cloth.

This brief work purports to address the response of Southern Plains tribes to events so dramatic that "intertribal and international systems [and] self-organizing patterns of existence no longer functioned within natural norms" (pp. 1–2). The solution to this state of affairs, says Meredith, rests with the tribes' ability to revivify traditional institutional values. "The vigor and resilience of native genius," he concludes, will produce the self-respect and confidence that tribes must have to face the future (p. 168).

The central metaphor for understanding this response is dance, which Meredith says is a window for observing the deep and fundamental differences between native and Anglo worlds. Chiefly this amounts to a dichotomy explaining Western cultural patterns as adversarial—based on the metaphor of war and of "winning at all costs" (p. 3). The other side of the dichotomy explains that Southern Plains tribes prefer "harmonious and aesthetically pleasing" patterns in which participants are perceived as "performers" for whom argument and force are less divisive, even unimportant (p. 3). By examining such topics as commerce, religion, peacemaking, reservations, and self-determination, Meredith proposes to