



Valerie Sherer Mathes and Phil Brigandi, *Reservations, Removal, and Reform: The Mission Indian Agents of Southern California, 1878-1903*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. 304 pp. Hardcover \$36.95.

In *Reservations, Removal, and Reform: The Mission Indian Agents of Southern California, 1878-1903*, Valerie Sherer Mathes and Phil Brigandi discuss the unique role of the Indian agent, an oft-overlooked force in the relations between Native peoples and Anglo settlers. Mathes and Brigandi highlight the manner in which Indian agents influenced policies and shaped the dynamic present in Southern California in the decades following the Mexican-American War and the United States' acquisition of the region. By focusing specifically on Indian agents, the authors demonstrate how these individuals can serve as a "lens with which to view a broader selection of the various

issues and events all too common in Southern California in the second half of the nineteenth century" (ix). Such issues include water preservation and rights, settlement westward, agricultural practices, and education. The authors note that "their goal is simply to present a summary of the careers of the men who served as Mission Indian agents, both special and regular, set against the events of the time" (xi). While other works have focused on individual accounts of Indian agents, Mathes and Brigandi provide readers with a more holistic study that compares and contrasts each agent and his successor while also considering the broader historical context. Mathes and Brigandi draw upon the reports and correspondence of the agents themselves along with contemporary newspapers and court records. The work is organized chronologically. The authors begin with a chapter detailing the development of the role of the Indian agent; each successive chapter is then devoted to a specific Indian agent. As such, the chapters function as case studies that allow readers to see the unique characteristics of each Indian agent while also discussing how each individual fits into the historical narrative.

Policymakers in Washington were initially skeptical about the establishment of a permanent Indian agent in Southern California. Prior to 1878, a series of special agents were tasked with managing the Indians. Such special agents and superintendents drew upon models typical of the Franciscan mission systems. To this end, these figures "took over the former role of the *padres*" in their mission to make the Indians "self-sustaining" (6). However, because these special agents lacked the funding and direction to provide meaningful leadership, Congress established a permanent Indian agent post in 1878 first held by Samuel S. Lawson. Throughout the late nineteenth century, the agents sought to secure water rights, establish schools and irrigation systems, and implement sustainable agricultural practices. Each agent faced continual challenges related to funding and decision making in Washington that did not serve the unique needs of the Mission Indians of Southern California. Eventually the Indian agent system as it was known in Southern California in the late nineteenth century ended in 1903 with the administration of the Mission Indians being split into governance by two superintendents.

Reservations, Removal, and Reform provides readers with a good overview of how the Indian agent system functioned in Southern California; however, the work at times does not fully

articulate the complex racial dynamics inherent in the agent system. While these dynamics are implied throughout the work, the authors could have more fully explored this interplay. Moreover, the structure of the work, at times, feels disjointed as each chapter largely functions independently. More analysis could have been done at the end of the work to tie these chapters together and to assess the lasting legacy of the agents in terms of relations between settlers and Indians. Still, Mathes and Brigandi's work serves as an excellent guide to a particular topic that was otherwise unexplored in the historiography of the Mission Indians.

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