

Valerie Sherer Mathes, Phil Brigandi. *Reservations, Removal, and Reform: The Mission Indian Agents of Southern California, 1878-1903.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. Illustrations. xi + 287 pp. \$36.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8061-5999-7.

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Valerie Sherer Mathes and Phil Brigandi have focused on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century California history in previous publications. They specifically have concentrated on individuals associated with the Mission Indians in Southern California, such as Helen Hunt Jackson, Charles Painter, and other reformers. *Reservations, Removal, and Reform: The Mission Indian Agents of Southern California, 1878-1903* continues this research and highlights the US government's Mission Indian agents. These agents were composed of politically connected non-Indian men appointed to oversee the Native American population in Southern California.

The book begins with an overview of the early special agents in California to "ascertain what should be done about the Mission Indians" (p. 3). This overview lays the foundation for what ultimately led to the creation of Indian reservations, federally recognized and un-recognized tribal units, and the Mission Indian Agency in Southern California. Mathes and Brigandi focus on seven Mission Indian agents from 1878 to 1903: Samuel S. Lawson, John G. McCallum, John Shirley Ward, Joseph W. Preston, Horatio Nelson Rust, Francisco Estudillo, and Dr. Lucius A. Wright. All were white Protestant men with connections to religious reform movements and political parties and with

little knowledge of the region or of the people they were supposed to manage. Concentrating on these Mission Indian agents and their interactions with the Native population has created a unique interpretation of this neglected historiography of California.

Through these agents' writings, the authors address the many issues of the Kumeyaay (Diegueño), Cupeño, Luiseño, and Cahuilla in Southern California Indian Country and illuminate the ever-changing reality of federal Indian policy. The source material demonstrates the confusing interactions between the federal agents and the Mission Indian population. The issues were plentiful: forced removals from traditional lands and onto reservation lands, which were conveniently placed far away from populated areas; water rights; non-Indian trespassers and squatters on tribal lands; pilferage of Native artifacts, relics, and handicrafts; and continuous legal challenges, which more often than not left Southern California Indians in limbo. This period was turbulent in Southern California. The promised executive order reservations were continuously challenged by American citizens who deemed all land private and by unscrupulous agents who took advantage of the position to gain financially.

Mathes and Brigandi expose many disturbing events that occurred to every tribal nation in Southern California; not one tribal entity was spared. The authors are especially attentive to the shenanigans by non-Native landowners, ranchers, and speculators who used legal means to steal Indian lands. For example, the Santa Ysabel Indians were pressured to leave their homes at Rancho Santa Ysabel and move to the reservation lands on Volcan Mountain, which at that time could barely support the tribal population. The eviction and removal of the Cupeños from Agua Caliente (Warner Ranch) to the Pala Reservation thirty-six miles away is a distressing account but important for the reader to understand how ineffectual Mission Indian agents were to their “wards.”

In their writings, various agents emphasized the differences between Mission Indians and the non-Indian populace of Americans. Agent Ward (1885-87) stated in his annual report that the “lounging, loitering, lazy, lousy son of the forests ... must be taught to work by persuasion if possible, by force if necessary” (p. 70). Their descriptions of Mission Indians ranged from “peaceable,” “pitiful,” and “ignorant as children,” which created a distinctive stereotype that the federal government embraced to categorize Southern California’s Indians as lost without the firm hand of the government (pp. 50, 79, 82). These reports and attitudes lasted well into the late twentieth century. Yet Mathes and Brigandi also emphasize that the Indian leaders of the time were “politicians—with all that applies for good or ill. Some tried to cooperate with the agents; some tried to outmaneuver them; some saw them, as they sometimes were, as simply ineffective” (p. 188). Therefore, even with the fluctuations of the Mission Indian agents and in policies, the Indians in Southern California fought for their people and identities.

Mathes and Brigandi mined primary documents from the National Archives Special Collections, the Bancroft Library, the Huntington Library, and the San Jacinto Museum, as well as pri-

vate collections and other sources. In addition to discussing Mission Indian agents, the authors also examine accounts of some Native participants: William Pablo, Gervasio Cabezon, Cecilio Blacktooth, and Ignacio Curo. This is an important compilation of many individuals, both Native and non-Native, who contributed to the fate of Southern California’s Mission Indians, and it unveils the swinging pendulum of federal Indian policies in all its complexity in Southern California Indian Country.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-california>

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