

Mikaëla M. Adams. *Who Belongs: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South*. Oxford University Press, 2016. 330 pp. ISBN: 9780190619466.

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Gregory D. Smithers. *Native Southerners: Indigenous History from Origins to Removal*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2019. 259 pp. ISBN: 9780806162287.

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Over the last three decades, historical studies of the Indigenous peoples of the Southeast have proliferated. Current scholarship stands on the shoulders of ethnohistorical work by Theda Perdue, Michael Green, Clara Sue Kidwell, and Patricia Galloway, whose books focused primarily on Cherokee and Choctaw peoples. The journal *Native South* appeared on the scene in 2008, providing an additional platform for interdisciplinary scholarship in the field, and was edited by historians Greg O'Brien and James Taylor Carson, and anthropologist Robbie Etheridge, all of whom had already published significant monographs on southeastern tribes. As the historical field has grown, so have other studies of the Native South, with important work being conducted by scholars of literature, religion, and other humanistic forms of inquiry.¹

Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South (2016) by Mikaëla M. Adams, one of Theda Perdue's doctoral students at the University of North Carolina, and *Native Southerners: Indigenous History from Origins to Removal* (2019) by Gregory D. Smithers, a productive and dynamic historian, are both important new studies of the Indigenous peoples of the U.S. Southeast; yet, they take distinctly different tacks. *Native Southerners* is a sweeping chronology that begins with oral traditions that grew out of southeastern land and ends in the mid-nineteenth century with the repercussions of the Indian Removal Act of 1830. *Who Belongs?* provides case studies of six southeastern tribes as they developed citizenship requirements in the context of the tumultuous political shifts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including segregation and evolving federal Indian policy.

Because Smithers's book strives to be expansive and Adams's goal is to explore specific examples of citizenship formation, it makes sense to begin with the former. Smithers declares in his introduction that he desires to "introduce" his audience to Native Southerners prior to and post-European invasion of North America (14). To that end, he seeks to define the region by adopting geographical boundaries per the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian's outline, overviewing historical and anthropological arguments about it, and includes William C. Sturtevant's map of North American tribes as further reference point (7-10).

One of the most compelling aspects of Smithers's book is his approach to the first chapter, which begins with a Creek origin story. He notes that he wanted such oral narratives to be "juxtaposed against Western theories of Native American migrations" (12). Smithers provides an excellent overview of significant oral stories that informed the culture, society, and religions of several southeastern tribes. There are more detailed descriptions of stories about larger tribes such as the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks, but he also discusses origin stories of smaller tribes such as the Natchez and Catawba, especially the ways their stories have been intertwined with Christian narratives. This section will be of particular interest to readers of Southeastern

Native literature, as many of the origin stories detailed here resonate with those retold in books such as *Shell Shaker* by Choctaw author LeAnne Howe, *Riding the Trail of Tears* by Cherokee author Blake Hausman, and *Pushing the Bear* by Cherokee-descended author Diane Glancy. Smithers also summarizes origin theories of Indigenous southerners by Western scientists, arguing that they “cannot be ignored because they constitute a part of the enduring legacy of settler colonial logic and the drive to empirically know, categorize, and confine Native people” (16). These theories are buttressed by critiques of Native scholars, leaders, and elders. This chapter also makes the important point of aligning Indigenous adoption of various technologies based on agricultural and trading systems with other forms of origin-making, ranging from the construction of mound and town complexes to the development of the bow and arrow.

The second chapter of *Native Southerners* explores the development of the Mississippian chiefdoms, which arose as a result of a period of global warming that “triggered a series of ‘megadroughts’ across North America” (36). Smithers argues that understanding how climate change affected the Indigenous peoples of the Southeast is an important reason to study the history of its chiefdoms, which he argues “emerged as a means of uniting people in a sense of communalism” (37). The chapter begins with the shift away from mobile lifestyles to more agrarian-based societies including the development of mound structures such as Poverty Point and then zooms into deeper examinations of the paramount chiefdoms of Cahokia and Etowah, as well as smaller chiefdoms such as Timucua, Chattahoochee, Coosa, and Tombigbee. He also explores the way simple chiefdoms formed paramount chiefdoms, such as in the case of Moundville, which ultimately collapsed about one hundred years prior to the arrival of Hernando de Soto in the mid-sixteenth century. In addition to geo-political elements of mound societies, Smithers discusses cultural elements such as the use of color and symbolism in art, clothing, and jewelry, and gender roles, particularly matrilineality. This chapter concludes with the arrival of European invaders and the ways they impacted Indigenous diplomatic practices and warfare, particularly through the Indian slave trade.

The next two chapters of *Native Southerners* examine the way the Mississippian chiefdoms splintered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, due to an increasing engagement with European colonists. Smithers cites Etheridge’s neologism of a “shatter zone” (59) emerging in the region that helped transform the chiefdom system and permitted new economies to evolve, including the Indian slave trade. Indigenous southerners were both participants in and victims of this economy. Smithers also notes the devastating impact of new diseases, especially smallpox, and the growth of coalescent societies that still exist today including Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks. Warfare also characterizes this era, and Smithers details how wars such as a series of conflicts with the Tuscarora ultimately transformed the demography of parts of the South. The fourth chapter continues Smithers’s examination of coalescent southeastern tribes, focusing more on lifeways and cultural practices. For example, readers of Howe’s novel *Shell Shaker* will find a sense of familiarity in Smithers’ descriptions of eighteenth-century Choctaw life, such as its town divisions and leadership hierarchies, a testament to Howe’s own meticulous historical research. This chapter also discusses Creek, Caddo, Natchez, Catawba, Chickasaw, and Cherokee lifeways.

The fifth chapter of *Native Southerners* concentrates on the mid-eighteenth century to the emergence of the United States, detailing the ways that southeastern tribes allied themselves in various colonial conflicts such as the Anglo-Cherokee War, the Seven Years' War, and the American Revolution. This chapter also explores the way that pan-Indianism developed in the Southeast as a way of uniting tribes frustrated by white American disregard of their political positions or land rights. Smithers pays special attention to the separatist message of Lenni Lenape prophet Neolin and the military strategies of Chickamauga Cherokee Dragging Canoe who attempted to ally with the Shawnees.

The final chapter begins with the Creek Red Stick rebellion, signaling a shift toward tribal nationalism in the Native South. This nationalism is evident in the ways Indigenous people allied with colonial powers in the War of 1812 and in the ways that tribal leaders maneuvered themselves as it became clear that Indian Removal was central to Andrew Jackson's plans when he became president in 1829. Smithers traces the ways that Indigenous southeasterners had adapted to the economies of settler colonialism, particularly the ways that some tribal members accrued wealth through plantation ownership, including ownership of African and African-descended slaves. He also notes how removal of Native peoples from their lands was an argument developing for years in the U.S. government, with Thomas Jefferson being one of its proponents. The chapter does a thorough job of discussing the different ways tribes reacted to land cession and removal treaties and, unsurprisingly, spends the most time on the Cherokee Nation's well-known jurisdictional resistance to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Georgia Indian Laws. There is a brief discussion of southeastern Indigenous diasporic communities that completes this chapter and continues in the Epilogue, as well as acknowledgement of those smaller tribes who were not displaced during the Removal Era.

If Smithers's approach is macrocosmic, then Adams's is microcosmic. *Who Belongs?* proceeds from this very important point: "'Indian' is not merely an ethnic or racial identity; rather it is a political status based on an individual's citizenship in one of several hundred tribal nations that have, or have the potential to have, a legal relationship with the United States" (1). Though she focuses on specific cases, a broad view of *Who Belongs?* reveals an interesting truth about Indigenous southeasterners: regardless of whether they are members of tribes who were not forced to Indian Territory through treaties or who are remnants of tribes who were, the nineteenth century attempt to eradicate southeastern Natives failed. Adams's book begins by exploring the complex history of tribal citizenship, noting that though the federal government now permits tribes to develop their own citizenship criteria, that was not always the case. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, federal Indian policy and state-sanctioned racial segregation in the South created situations where tribes saw that they needed to distinguish themselves racially in order to maintain their political positions and so "increasingly adopted racial criteria for tribal citizenship" (3). Adams traces the relationship between the development of citizenship criteria and tribal sovereignty, arguing that the former is essential for the latter. In order to contextualize the ways that the tribes she studies have established citizenship criteria, the introduction overviews relevant historical concepts and periods including the notion of tribal sovereignty; the racialization of tribal identity; the Indian Removal era; the allotment era; the impact of Jim Crow on southeastern tribes; the creation of tribal rolls; the adoption of blood

quantum as a citizenship marker; and the era of self-determination along with the complexities of federal recognition.

Adams's first chapter, "Policing Belonging, Protecting Identity," focuses on the Pamunkey tribe of Virginia and argues that it "used citizenship criteria to preserve its territorial sovereignty and to bolster its political status" (20). The Pamunkeys' story of self-preservation is a harrowing tale. The Pamunkeys, a tribe with a recognized relationship to Virginia since the colonial era, identify as descendants of "Powhatan's warriors" (38). Like other tribes in the Southeast including the Catawbans and the Mississippi Choctaws, the Pamunkeys fought the binaristic Jim Crow laws that would label them as "colored." In the late nineteenth century, they created a separate Indian school and church and insisted on recognition from the state as "Indian" peoples. Despite their classification as Indigenous peoples by anthropologists and ethnologists, they fell victim to the eugenicist Walter Ashby Plecker, the head of the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics from 1912 through 1946, whose mission was to "prove all people in Virginia who claimed to be Indians were actually the descendants of African Americans" (44). The introduction to the anthology *The People Who Stayed: Southeastern Indian Writing after Removal*, by Geary Hobson, Janet McAdams, and Katie Walkiewicz, describes Plecker as having "hated Indians" and "changed hundreds of Indians into white or black simply by the use of his pen" (1), a form of paper genocide. It is hard to describe Plecker as anything but villainous after reading Mikaëla Adams's detailed descriptions of the lengths he went to in order to deny the Pamunkey (and other Virginia tribes) Indian identity. Despite century of travails, the Pamunkeys did receive federal recognition on January 28, 2016, becoming the 567th federally recognized tribe. Adams follows their bid for recognition through multiple revisions, explaining how evolutions of their citizenship requirements are the key to their success.

"From Fluid Lists to Fixed Rolls," Adams's second chapter, examines the Catawba Indian Nation of South Carolina, which shares certain similarities to the Pamunkeys, including a long-standing relationship between state and tribe and a desire to distance themselves from African Americans during the era of legal segregation in order to maintain their status as a separate racial group. The Catawbans' story is unusual in the Southeast due to the impact of Mormonism on the community in the late nineteenth century. Mormons taught the Catawbans that "they were members of a lost tribe of Israel, the Lamanites" (65), uplifting their sense of identity in a region that discriminated against all non-whites. One effect of Mormonism on the Catawbans is that many converts moved West, which led to the tribe withholding payments received from the state for previous land cessions from those tribal members. The twentieth century saw the Catawbans gain federal recognition, go through the process of termination, and then re-gain federal recognition with the Settlement Act of 1993. These changes came alongside a formalization of the Catawba citizenship rolls, which have both been controversial and central to how the Catawbans define themselves today.

The third chapter, "Learning the Language of Blood," focuses on the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. Unlike the previous two tribes, who had remained intact during the Indian Removal era, the Mississippi Band of Choctaws were a remnant population of those who left as a result of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. Though the other chapters discuss cultural aspects

of the Pamunkeys and Catawbas, “Learning the Language of Blood,” thoroughly explores the relationship of Choctaw culture to their lands in what became Mississippi, including the mound they know as their place of origin, Nanih Waiya. The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek actually allowed for those Choctaws who wished to remain to do so and retain tribal citizenship, but the General Allotment Act of 1887 led to another schism between the Choctaws. In 1899, a roll of Mississippi Choctaws was created to determine who had rights to allotments in Indian Territory, part of the federal government’s attempt to move tribes from communal to private systems of ownership. Adams outlines the complex route that led to the 1,000 Choctaws remaining in Mississippi in 1907 to lose their citizenship in the Choctaw Nation, a story that includes fraudulent land claims and battles between the federal government and the Mississippi and Oklahoma Choctaws, much of which cycled around the question of blood quantum. Adams argues that the Mississippi Choctaws learned from this experience and “manipulated the language of blood to reassert their tribal sovereignty in their southeastern homelands” (131). The tribe gained federal recognition in 1945 and today numbers more than 10,500 members, all of whom must be at least “one-half Choctaw by blood” (130).

In “Contest of Sovereignty” Adams details the struggles the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have had to determine their own citizenship criteria. The Eastern Band stands apart from other southeastern tribes for a number of reasons: they made land claims with the state of North Carolina prior to Removal that were contingent upon giving up Cherokee citizenship; they received federal recognition in 1868, much earlier than other southeastern tribes; they won a court case in 1874 that gave them legal title to their lands, which they called the Qualla Boundary; and they incorporated themselves in 1889 to protect themselves against the numerous trespassers and frauds (“white Indians”) who attempted to steal their land (136). As a corporation they could take trespassers to court, sell timber and land, and establish a stronger political identity. As with the Mississippi Choctaws, the Allotment Era brought government representatives attempting to create a census of Eastern Band citizens, the Baker Roll. Adams notes the ways the Cherokees pushed back against the government’s version of the roll which exceeded the number of individuals that the tribe accepted as meeting the requisite blood quantum of one-sixteenth. In 1931, the Cherokees were successful in this fight as Congress suspended the allotment for the Qualla Boundary and agreed to their measure of one-sixteenth blood quantum. A new chapter in the question of Eastern Band citizenship began after the success of Harrah’s Casino, which opened in 1997. This drew a significant number of enrollment applications, especially after the tribe began distributing biannual payments to its citizens. An independent audit was held, and its product, the Falmouth Report, has created great controversy within the tribe because it suggests that hundreds of tribal members may not meet citizenship criteria. Adams notes that “fallout from the enrollment audit is still ongoing” (167). Today, there are 14,600 members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and the enrollment criteria is still one-sixteenth blood quantum, as well as direct lineage from someone listed on the Baker Rolls.

The final chapter, “Nation Building and Self-Determination” details the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, also remnant peoples who evaded Removal, describing how and why these tribes split as a form of self-determination. Their story is unique among southeastern Indigenous peoples because, as Adams explains, “kin ties and clan

identities instilled a sense of community belonging in the Indians[; however,] the Florida Seminoles disagreed about the political future of their tribe. Their challenge was not only to define *who* belonged to the tribe but also to determine to *what* tribe they belonged” (169). The Seminoles and Miccosukees are descended from Creeks who migrated southward from Alabama and Georgia in the eighteenth century. As with other tribes in the book, Adams describes the ways that current citizenship criteria are based in historical struggles the Seminoles and Miccosukees experienced as a result of settler colonialism. In this case, how the First, Second, and Third Seminole Wars of the nineteenth century led them to build their communities deep in the Florida swamps, eschewing interactions with whites as much as possible. Over time, within their discrete communities, it became clear that “[s]ome Seminoles believed an official tribal government and federal recognition would protect their interests in Florida, while others preferred to keep their loosely organized structure of bands led by medicine men” (171). In the 1950s, these groups split into the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. These differences are reflected in the citizenship requirements of the two tribes: the Miccosukees use traditional matrilineal definitions of kinship, while the Seminoles require a direct ancestral connection to the 1957 tribal census, one quarter blood quantum, and sponsorship by a tribal citizen. The economic value of citizenship has been effectively demonstrated by the Seminoles through their gaming industries, beginning with a bingo hall in 1979 and continuing through the building of the Hard Rock casino-resorts in 2006. In fact, the court case *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Butterworth* (1981) “paved the way for tribal gaming across the United States” (205).

Native Southerners: Indigenous History from Origins to Removal by Gregory D. Smithers and *Who Belongs?: Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* by Mikaëla M. Adams are complementary historical texts. Smithers’s book is a solid introductory resource to the long history of the Native South through the mid-nineteenth century, while Adams’s book deep dives into specific experiences of six southeastern tribes in the nineteenth and twentieth century, providing a surprisingly complete story of their histories as read through the lens of citizenship. Both books synthesize a number of archival and ethnographic resources, attempting to center Native experiences. Ultimately, *Native Southerners* and *Who Belongs?* are important contributions to the knowledge of a region where people often do not realize there are federally or state-recognized tribes, with the exception perhaps of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians or the Florida Seminoles. Smithers and Adams give voice to these and many more tribal experiences through their well-researched studies.

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Notes

¹ I took issue with the term “Native South” in my 2018 monograph *LeAnne Howe at the Intersections of Southern and Native American Literature* because I think it privileges the idea of the “South” as the former Confederacy and overshadows the long Indigenous history of the region, especially specific tribal identities. That said, I have heard some Indigenous peoples of

the southeastern U.S. refer to themselves as “Native Southerners,” and I made the argument in my book that Howe should be considered a “southern” writer in order to expand the canon of that regional literature. In summary, I am acknowledging the problematic nature of the term “Native South,” fully realizing that it has been institutionalized by the journal *Native South* and will probably remain in vogue for some time to come.

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