Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780–1880. By Daniel R. Mandell (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) 321 pp. \$55.00

Virtually every nineteenth-century local history of a New England town begins with a chapter about the last “red man” to have lived there. The tone is generally somber but optimistic—marking the sad but inevitable passing away of a noble race, thus allowing for the rise of true civilization. Scholarship of the last decade or so has been chipping away at this trope, but none has done so as comprehensively as Mandell. Studies of New England Indian history are rich, though heavily weighted to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the larger field of Indian history, the Old Northwest garners most attention in the era of the early Republic, before shifting to the Southeast in the era of Removal, and the West in the latter half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mandell’s book is part of what might be termed “the new new Indian history.” Ethnohistorians in the 1970s and 1980s began to challenge the older, triumphalist version of American history that, like those local New England histories, championed the spread of Anglo civilization and the extinction of Indian savagery. Two major themes dominated the New Indian History—resistance to white domination and communal survival. Although these topics were clearly important, this approach suffered from several blind spots, ironically perpetuating the invisibility of native peoples who lived interspersed among white or African-American populations, resisting in quieter ways than did Indians further west. The new new Indian history casts aside the poles of accommodation and resistance, studying Indians as they lived, in the nearly infinite blends of native, African-American, and Euro-American material and religious cultures.

Tribe, Race, History is a comprehensive survey of the social, communal, and work lives of native peoples in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island during the first century of the American republic. It rests on a truly impressive foundation of archival research. A chart representing Indian populations and land holdings encapsulates the extent of Mandell’s research, making a renewed case for the sort of number-crunching social history that has gone out of fashion (4–5). Mandell’s book is organized thematically within a larger chronological framework. The first three chapters focus on the first half-century and the next three on the latter half-century. Chapter 1 details the variety of economic strategies practiced by both individuals and communities, showing how Indians participated in the emerging marketplace while native reserves often functioned as “reservoirs of anti-market forces” (36).

Chapter 2, “Community and Family,” explores the fascinating dynamics of race, effectively challenging the bichromatic focus (black and white or Indian and white) of much of the existing literature. Much of the chapter is devoted to examining interracial marriage and its implications for community definition. Mandell argues that during the early

years, outsiders (mostly African-American) were incorporated into native communities relatively seamlessly but that as pressures on Indian lands increased and questions about allotment of resources emerged, tensions surfaced regarding community boundaries and gender dynamics.

A chapter about “Reform and Renaissance” focuses on external and internal reform movements, revealing how their agendas sometimes overlapped and sometimes conflicted. This chapter suggests the importance of the Indian Church as a locus of inner-directed reform, but it leaves the reader wanting to know more about the style and content of Native Christianity. A final chapter offers a fascinating discussion of the conflicts that surrounded “Citizenship and Termination,” demonstrating that the prospect of citizenship meant different things depending on one’s race and gender and suggesting that the debates in New England foreshadowed national debates.

Mandell’s superb book on a long-neglected subject should affect the way the larger narrative of this era of American history is written. Its scope of does not allow him to pause for long on any single individual, but he provides enough snippets of fascinating lives that scholars will want to know more. Mandell has provided a terrific essay on sources that should facilitate many a new study about these people who have remained invisible for too long.

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