

Who belongs?: race, resources, and tribal citizenship in the native South

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20469895&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

The right to determine tribal citizenship is fundamental to the exercise of tribal sovereignty. Deciding who belongs to Indian tribes has a complicated history, however, especially in the South. Indians who remained in the South following removal became a marginalized and anomalous people in an emerging biracial world. Despite the economic hardships and assimilationist pressures they faced, they insisted on their political identity as citizens of tribal nations and rejected Euro-American efforts to turn them into another racial minority. Drawing upon their cultural traditions, kinship patterns, and evolving needs to protect their land, resources, and identity from outsiders, southern Indians constructed tribally-specific citizenship criteria that went beyond the dominant society's racial definitions of Indian. This book addresses how six southern tribes, the Pamunkey Indian Tribe of Virginia, the Catawba Indian Nation of South Carolina, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, decided who belonged. By focusing on the rights and resources at stake, the effects of state and federal recognition, the influence of kinship systems and racial ideologies, and the process of creating official tribal rolls, this book historicizes belonging and reveals how Indians established legal identities. The varying experiences of these six tribes belie the notion of an essential Indian and show that citizenship in a tribe is a historically-constructed and constantly-evolving process.