

industrial and population changes at the hand of WWII transformed the city while bringing upticks in African American migration. However, as Asaka astutely states, “Black workers would find themselves shut out of the highest-paying jobs and restricted from many of the same neighborhoods as previous generations of workers, excluded as well from the vision of postwar prosperity they themselves were helping to build” (p. 186). Thus, as Asaka demonstrates, Seattle remains integral to larger patterns of urban development and racial exclusion in the United States while revealing the ways in which the specific demographics and geographic positioning of Seattle help us understand the entangled histories of colonialism, immigration, and labor in the twentieth-century United States. Finally, Asaka makes a compelling case for the contemporary relevance of Seattle’s history and the continued study of urban spaces through the lens of racial inequality. In this light, Asaka concludes her book stating, “Our current moment of heightened inequality and rampant gentrification underscores the dire need for critical analyses that refuse to romanticize the past. It’s through the routes of the past that we begin to reimagine our past and chart new paths toward more equitable futures” (p. 190).

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*Wardship and the Welfare State: Native Americans and the Formation of First-Class Citizenship in Mid-Twentieth-Century America.* By Mary Klann. (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press and the American Philosophical Society, 2024. 326 pp.)

*Wardship and the Welfare State* is an insightful contribution to American political history and Indigenous studies. Mary Klann’s exploration of Native people’s mid-twentieth-century interactions with the welfare state situates competing conceptions of “wardship” at the center of debates over poverty and social provision during the heyday of the New Deal state.

Klann argues that “Native poverty knowledge,” constructed over decades of assimilationist policymaking, was central to postwar conceptions of first-class citizenship. Its central premise, “the perception that wardship meant Native people were idle, impoverished, and unable to manage their finances” (pp. 96–97), blamed federal policies for creating Native “dependence.” Legislators championed termination and “competency” bills in the 1940s and 1950s, touting them as a way to transform Native people into “first-class

citizens” who “were able to manage their own individual property, were male heads of household, and neither profited from nor suffered under governmental oversight” (p. 51). Wardship and reservations, they argued, were signs of “racialized dependence” (p. 211).

Klann attends to policymaking on the ground, exploring individual Native people and families interacting with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents and local welfare officials as they sought access to benefits through the Social Security Act, the Servicemen’s Dependency Allowance Act, and the GI Bill. Defining wardship not as dependency but as a “legal and historical relationship” between the United States and Native nations (p. 5), they called on BIA agents to help them access the benefits to which they were entitled as citizens. State and local policymakers, meanwhile, cited wardship, particularly the exemption of Native reservation lands from property taxes, as an excuse for denying Native people access to state-funded benefits. Political opponents of the welfare state, too, pointed to Native American poverty and “dependency” as a warning of the dangers of federal largesse doled out to assuage public guilt.

Klann discusses Native activists’ challenges to dominant “individualized and transactional understanding of community membership” (p. 215) with a framework of relationality. They insisted that reservation lands, BIA programs, and other aspects of wardship were part of the “ongoing legal relationship sustained by the debt of the United States government to Native tribes” rather than special treatment. They called on the state to continue to pay its debt and to be “a good relation to Native people” (p. 184). They exposed policymakers’ definitions of “equality” and “emancipation” as profound misunderstandings of the historical and legal relationship between the United States and Native nations. And they articulated the need “for both care and sovereignty, the state’s social responsibility and political obligation” that “humanized Native people” and laid foundations for the kinds of care-focused welfare rights activism of the later twentieth century.

Klann makes a convincing case that Indian poverty knowledge and fights over Native access to benefits shaped mid-century conceptions of citizenship and the welfare state. Based on deep research and informed by broad theoretical engagement, *Wardship and the Welfare State* is a valuable addition to welfare state history and a compelling argument for the centrality of Native people to expanding our understanding of American political history and state formation.

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