

**Chitto Harjo: Native Patriotism and the Medicine Way.** By Donald L. Fixico. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2025. 256 pages. \$28.00 hardcover; \$28.00 e-book.

Donald Fixico's *Chitto Harjo: Native Patriotism and the Medicine Way* is a concise and powerful study of an underexplored Indigenous leader. Historians of Native America have long recognized Donald Fixico (Mvskoke, Seminole, Shawnee, and Sac and Fox) as a foremost interpreter of federal Indian policy, resource extraction, and twentieth-century Indigenous life. Across his career, he urged scholars to expand the methodological boundaries of a colonial discipline and to center Native epistemologies. His newest book shows what we gain when that call is realized. Fixico gathers archival traces and oral histories into a layered, cohesive history of Chitto Harjo and the Mvskoke Nation from before their eastern removal to the first decades of the twentieth century.

Chitto Harjo (translated to English as *Crazy Snake*) spearheaded Mvskoke resistance to US allotment policies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fixico presents Harjo as a Mvskoke patriot who tirelessly strove to uphold the traditional values of his nation. To do so, Harjo organized what became known as the Crazy Snake Rebellion, whose adherents collaborated across tribal and racial lines to defend tribal sovereignty and traditional governance as a levee against the rising waters of federal encroachment.

One of Fixico's main themes emphasizes the deep and steadfast power of the Mvskoke medicine way. Each chapter opens with an epigraph that explains a key element of Mvskoke epistemology, orienting readers culturally while embedding Harjo's story within a Creek framework of meaning. Fixico frames Harjo's resistance through the notion of Native patriotism—a commitment to self-determination and political independence, but also “a loyalty to Mvskoke traditional identity that we call *poyvekv*” (5). In the Creek glossary at the front of the book, *poyvekv* is defined as “soul, spirit, ghost” (xii). Harjo's Native patriotism, then, was a political and cultural expression of Mvskoke community, belonging, and continuity. Such framing renders Creek communities visible in their own light without flattening their complexity.

Fixico's documentation of the complex valences of Mvskoke cultural and political change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is strengthened by his decision to let Creek and non-Native witnesses speak directly to the reader. The book opens with Harjo's own testimony, and the direct memories of historical witnesses drawn from oral histories and archival sources border each chapter. Their immediacy makes Creek communities feel vivid and close, while reminding us that the past is a fleeting, vibrant, and fascinating country. By giving these witnesses room to breathe and speak, Fixico lets their testimony move through the pages like living memory.

The book's coherence—its deep archival grounding and reconstruction of Creek political life through Harjo's leadership and activism—also defines the contours of its limits. Fixico centers Mvskoke political leadership, collective resistance, and factionalism but gives less attention to the gendered dimensions of Creek sovereignty or the shifting roles of Mvskoke women within these struggles. Attention to women's political and ceremonial labor might have complicated his portrayal of resistance as purely masculine leadership, revealing how the medicine way itself was sustained through women's authority as well as men's. Likewise, though the narrative is saturated with material for exploring Creek masculinity, this theme remains implicit. Finally, while Fixico thoughtfully traces the contests over identity and belonging, he gives less space to the racial dynamics that shaped Creek slaveholding and understandings of freedom and kinship. By treating Creek slaveholding largely as a contextual fact rather than an evolving social logic, the narrative misses an opportunity to consider how sovereignty, belonging, and freedom within the Creek Nation were themselves inflected by gender and race. Yet these omissions do not diminish the book's importance; they instead invite future scholars to extend Fixico's foundation toward a fuller social history of the Mvskoke world. Most of all, the book pulses with the vitality of Mvskoke political and community life—so vividly that readers are left eager to understand how gender and race also animated these arenas.

Fixico's account of early twentieth-century Creek politics and resistance is distinctive for its insistence on a Creek-centric epistemology. It can and should be read alongside Robbie Ethridge's *Creek Country* (2003) and Claudio Saunt's *Black, White, and Indian* (2005) for broader context on the pre-removal Mvskoke world, and with Gary Zellar's *African Creeks* (2007) that explores belonging and the legacies of slavery within the Creek Nation. Tiya Miles's *The House on Diamond Hill* (2010), though centered on a different nation, offers a compelling example of how historians can track changes in gender roles and racial ideologies with empathetic rigor. Yet among these important studies, only Fixico places Creek ways of knowing, speaking, and remembering at the heart and as the frame of history. He does so with clarity and care, rendering a narrative that illuminates and moves in equal measure.

Fixico extends the trajectory of Indigenous historiography shaped by scholars who have challenged historians to interpret Native history through Indigenous categories of thought. His work belongs firmly in this lineage and advances it by translating methodological calls into narrative practice. His integration of oral history, Native language, and Mvskoke philosophy shows how Indigenous-centered history can speak across audiences without losing its specificity or authority. In doing so, Fixico offers not only a history of Chitto Harjo but a model for how Native nations can narrate sovereignty and resistance on their own terms.

*Chitto Harjo* makes a vital contribution to Creek and Indigenous political history by documenting the complexity and endurance of Mvskoke sovereignty in the early twentieth century. Through meticulous research and luminous narrative clarity, the book renders Creek leadership and community life with a depth that will engage both scholars and students. What is most important is that it models how historical writing can emerge from within Mvskoke epistemologies rather than merely describing

them from the outside, demonstrating how Indigenous methodologies can transform our histories of resistance and governance. Fixico has produced a work of great care and intellectual generosity that will resonate across Native and Indigenous studies for years to come.

What lingers after reading this book is a feeling of closeness and relationship with Mvskoke endurance, and a sense that the medicine way continues to move quietly and powerfully through the archival and historical record. This is a history both careful and vibrantly alive, and it invites us to listen differently and closely—to the voices of the past, to the knowledge systems that sustained them, and to our responsibilities as historians who carry these stories forward.

*Angela Parker* (Mandan, Hidatsa, Cree)  
University of Denver