

The dispossession of American Indian land continued after passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934, and lasted well into the late twentieth century. Early research focused primarily on the impacts of federal Indian policy on reservations and allotted land areas. Few studies examined why individual American Indian land owners sold their property and how the sales shaped the geography of Indian Country during the post-IRA era. The purpose of this study is to investigate the allotment problem at a local scale, using historical land maps and BIA documents to determine why Indian owned land bases continued to decline after 1934. The author's tribal affiliation with the Kiowas of southwestern Oklahoma led to the selection of their land base as a subject of inquiry and geographical focal point. During the twentieth century, Kiowas lost approximately 59 percent of their land allotment base in the study area. Land owners sold their land just to survive, to subsidize incomes, to improve their living conditions, to counter owner fractionation, to relocation to urban areas, and to pay off debts. Some of these trends were common among all American rural communities associated with twentieth century economic shifts. Kiowas today are concerned about their land resources, arguing that land owners should collectively take a more proactive role in allotment land management, including the development of renewable energy resources projects.

Keywords: Indigenous geographies, land dispossession, land allotments, Kiowa, Indian

Reorganization Act of 1934