

The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains, by Willard H. Rollings. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993. x, 320 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY TERRY P. WILSON, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

While the numerous and powerful peoples of the northern plains and forests designated as Sioux have received much scholarly and popular attention, their linguistic cousins, the Dhegian-Siouan speakers—the Osage, Ponca, Kansa, and Quapaw—have remained in relative obscurity. The most historically significant of them, the Osage, dominated the southern prairie-plains region of what was later demarcated as western Missouri and Arkansas and eastern Kansas and Oklahoma for much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This large tribe, which numbered at least five thousand in the 1760s, owed its hegemony over smaller tribal neighbors and still less numerous Europeans to a geographical advantage: the Missouri River system at its heart was the vital transportation and communication highway of the region. Ironically, the Osages' geopolitical prominence led directly to their decline and ultimate westward removal by 1840 as the Anglo-American frontier forced more powerful eastern tribes into their territory. The United States government never engaged the Osages in war directly, which is partly why historians have neglected the tribe and its affairs. Anthropologists and other social scientists have tended to ignore the Osages because they did not fit neatly into a culturally and geographically determined classificatory system; they lived as forest dwellers in permanent villages but left them for substantial periods of time to hunt buffalo on the plains.

Fortunately, Willard Rollings chose to shed light on Osage history between 1673 and 1840 by focusing on the tribespeople as the primary actors, shaping their own destinies rather than simply reacting to European and Euro-American policies and actions. He successfully mines the available multidisciplinary sources to construct a comprehensive understanding of Osage culture and internal polity so that the tribe's external relations with other Indians and non-Indians makes sense. Throughout his narrative Rollings emphasizes the ways a flexible culture comprehended changes swirling around it and adjusted traditional patterns not only to cope but to flourish and maintain control for as long as possible. The resultant ethnohistory becomes an absorbing account of a sophisticated people grappling with European intruders and the ambitions of nearby native nations. Rollings's account thus stands in stark contrast to earlier historians' conceptual-

izations of hapless Indian victims succumbing to the white man's advancing frontier.

The Osages followed a complex cultural tradition for centuries before non-Indians came to their land. They arranged themselves in five villages originally and maintained five band identities when the old living patterns splintered into multiple towns. Each band maintained its own political structure, with twenty-four clans contributing to decision making and ceremonial matters. Tribally, the people were divided into moieties, the *Tzi-zhu* and *Hon-ga*, from which dual leaders were chosen for each band. Tribal society was decidedly undemocratic, with important functions the province of specific clans, although the elaborate social and political structure did not possess much in the way of coercive power, a condition that Europeans consistently refused to believe based on their own more monolithic national governments. Osage economic expansion into the fur and slave trades, a means of establishing and keeping hegemonic control of their land, eventually created political divisions demanding compromises that ultimately proved inadequate to maintain tribal integrity, and unity was irrevocably lost.

Rollings carefully and lucidly balances his narrative with close attention to internal issues and external affairs. General readers should find his prose easygoing, and scholars will appreciate the subtleties of his analysis. The only cavils likely from either group are the paucity of illustrations (four) and maps (one) and an eccentrically arranged bibliography that fails to separate primary and secondary sources.

The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, volume 2, Continental America, 1800–1867, by D. W. Meinig. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993. xix, 636 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN C. HUDSON, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Anyone who enjoyed *Atlantic America, 1492–1800*, the first volume of geographer Donald Meinig's *The Shaping of America*, surely will not be disappointed with this second installment. With one well-received volume already behind him, the brush strokes on this great canvas he has chosen to paint have only grown bolder and more confident. The project itself has expanded, with the third volume (1850–1915) listed in preparation and a fourth (1915–1992) projected. Meinig has undertaken more than a geographer's task of interpreting history; he has recast the familiar time and place of historical events into a geo-

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