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Review of *Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790 - 1916*, by Judith A. Boughter.

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Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790-1916. By Judith A. Boughter. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. Photographs, maps, notes, bibliography, index. xii + 289 pp. \$27.95.

The question of whose history is portrayed in any historical narrative remains open to debate. Judith Boughter notes in the preface to *Betraying the Omaha Nation* that "until now, no one has written a comprehensive history of the Omahas from their legendary origins to their near destitution by the early twentieth century." Her book is reportedly the first part of a trilogy, with subsequent volumes proposing to address Omaha history through World War II as well as contemporary legal battles to regain lost lands. Boughter rightly recognizes one of this volume's greatest shortcomings by reminding us that "only a few of the [Omaha] people left written records; thus the overwhelming majority of Omahas from these earlier generations must remain forever silent." Unfortunately for us, that silence will continue until historians can come to recognize the validity of narratives held in a community's oral history archives.

Boughter's work is nonetheless a well-crafted story of the Omahas' relations and interactions with various episodes of American white history. Some of these include land speculation in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa, western expansion and settlement in the Great Plains, and the formulation, implementation, and outcome of a mind-numbing profusion of federal Indian policies.

Betraying the Omaha Nation offers a welcome revision of the static view of Omaha culture presented in *The Omaha Tribe* of Fletcher and La Flesche (1911). Drawing on a wealth of documentary data, Boughter narrates a rich story about what happens when two nations with conflicting value systems meet. The reader is drawn into the complex world of factions and special interest groups, zealots, mercenaries, victims, policymakers, heroes, and villains created by both sides. Six chapters follow the Omahas from being a domi-

nating force in the eighteenth-century middle Missouri River region, through the years of decimating epidemics and repeated attacks by neighboring tribes, to their increasing contact and connections with local white and federal interests. Attention is given to the impact of traders, alcohol, and changing land tenure. Of special interest is the process of land allotment with its subsequent policies and practices intended to separate the Omahas from both their lands and their cultural heritage. *Betraying the Omaha Nation* effectively details the success of the former policies, the Omahas residing today on a much reduced land base. To what extent they have been separated from their cultural heritage remains an open question.

This provocative interpretation of history can be recommended to Omaha and non-Omaha readers alike as a foundation for stimulating discussions on Omaha-white relations and federal policy practices, especially since the "civilization" processes tested first on the Omaha people were later extended to many other Native nations. Students of American frontier, Great Plains, and Nebraska history will also find it a useful resource.

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