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Review of Pawnee Passage, 1870-1875

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Pawnee Passage, 1870-1875. By Martha Royce Blaine. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990. Preface, notes, bibliography and suggested readings, index. xvi + 345 pp. \$27.95.

In 1875 the Pawnees were removed from the remains of their vast lands in Nebraska to a new reservation in Indian territory. Relying on historical sources as well as oral history accounts of Pawnee life, Blaine documents the mounting pressures on the tribe in the years between 1870 to 1875 that finally led to their expulsion from Nebraska. She carefully describes the change in

the Pawnee way of life that resulted from government policies and pressures by surrounding settlers.

The beginning of the book explores the relation between the Pawnees and the white settlers surrounding the reservation. As the land around the reservation was occupied, the Pawnee reservation was eyed as a source of new land for American settlement. The theft of timber was common, but the Pawnees rarely received just compensation.

Chapters two through four focus on different aspects of Pawnee subsistence: agriculture, the horse, and the buffalo, which furnished not only subsistence but also central portions of the Pawnee's spiritual and cultural life. The changes in subsistence activities forced upon them by government agents and other circumstances, such as the increasing scarcity of the buffalo, reverberated deeply throughout Pawnee society. The lack of bison meat, for example, meant that important ceremonies could not be performed.

Blaine then deals with the Pawnee and Sioux relationship. The severity of Sioux raiding on the increasingly defenseless and impoverished Pawnees was an important factor in their decision to leave the reservation for Indian territory. Promised government protection was never forthcoming.

The final chapters focus on the mostly ill-fated attempts to "civilize" the Pawnees. The continued pressure to change, often enforced by the selective distribution of treaty payments, produced severe alterations in the structure of Pawnee society, such as a shift of power from traditional chiefs to the agent. After reiterating the Pawnee land loss through treaties and acts, the author describes in tragic detail the removal to the new reservation in Indian territory in 1875 and the loss of their last traditional lands in Nebraska.

While this is a scholarly book, as the extensive footnoting indicates, the Pawnee stories and songs make it also very entertaining to read. Blaine's insight into Pawnee culture as the wife of Pawnee head chief Garland J. Blaine gives the reader a view of dispossession from the

Pawnee perspective. For anybody interested in the Native American history of the Plains, Blaine's book will be an essential source.

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