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Review of *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the TransMississippi West*. By John P. Bowes

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Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West. By John P. Bowes. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xiv + 272 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$73.99 cloth, \$23.99 paper.

In *Exiles and Pioneers*, John Bowes examines the dynamic histories of the nineteenth-century Shawnees, Delawares, Potawatomis, and Wyandots as they struggled to find a stable place in an aggressively expanding nation. Bowes acknowledges their status as exiles forced from cherished homelands during the era of Indian removal, but he also argues that members of these Native communities acted as pioneers in the Trans-Mississippi West. Already in motion before passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, they traveled west—sometimes voluntarily, often by force—where they built and rebuilt their communities in Missouri, Kansas, and Indian Territory. Bowes contends that “the history of these Indian communities in the nineteenth century encompasses a contest over geographic and political place” in the United States.

Bowes views the Indian Removal Act as only one of many important transitions in the histories of the four nations. In the first chapter he documents a series of movements of Delaware and Shawnee bands to new lands west of the Mississippi. The migrations started even before the Louisiana Purchase and continued into the 1820s. The emigrants relied on kinship and commercial connections in the creation of these new western communities.

The implementation of formal removal policy in the 1830s represented a new level of pressure and violence for Indians in the southern Great Lakes. During the Potawatomi Trail of Death in 1838 the Indiana militia marched several hundred people from Indiana to eastern Kansas. Illness was common and dozens died on the journey. Yet Bowes demonstrates the continuing influence of Native networks on the movement and transformation of communities as people adapted to life on the edge of the Great Plains. Here, pioneer Indian communities worked to hold onto lands coveted

by Americans. They also contended with the divisive effects of Bleeding Kansas and the Civil War. In the long run, many communities resettled once again, moving south to Indian Territory.

The great strength of this work is the research Bowes conducted in federal records and state archives. He has pieced together complex histories of diverse Native communities in a period of trial and transformation, revealing the internal and highly localized political concerns that affected the ways Indian leaders labored to protect the autonomy of their communities. It is this complexity that makes the story difficult to follow in places. More polished prose and the incorporation of stronger narrative elements would have helped the reader considerably. Nevertheless, Bowes has placed Indian removal in a larger historical context that makes his argument that Indians were both exiles and pioneers compelling. One hopes that the history of eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West will receive more attention in the future.

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