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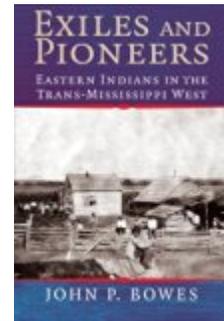
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

John P. Bowes. *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. xiv + 272 pp. \$22.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-67419-5.

Reviewed by Alan Shackelford (Denison University)

Published on H-AmIndian (January, 2009)

Commissioned by Patrick G. Bottiger



Unfamiliar Stories and Familiar Events

Histories of the removal of American Indian communities from the Southeast to what was then Indian Territory and is now the state of Oklahoma are not new. Indian removal plays a prominent role in synthetic narratives of both American Indian and U.S. histories. Indeed, Indian removal is one of the few instances in which American Indian history consistently intersects with conventional national narratives. But John P. Bowes, in his new study, promises to shed light on the oft-neglected removal of Indian communities from the Old Northwest to the portion of Indian Territory that would become Kansas. He also promises to resituate Indian removal within the larger narratives of American Indian history as well as U.S. history. As Bowes notes, traditionally scholars of Native America either commence or end their narratives with removal. In contrast, he constructs a different temporal scope, one that looks at removal as a point of transition for Indian communities rather than as simply an end in the East or a beginning in the West.

This is not a comprehensive study of Indian removal from the Old Northwest. Rather, Bowes focuses on several specific communities of Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis removed from Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin during the 1830s and 1840s. Such groups as the Mesquakies, Sauks, Kickapoos, and Miamis are addressed only in passing. Bowes persuasively argues that the experiences of the communities he studies both before and during removal shaped subsequent experiences in the West and contributed to

their subsequent dispossession in Kansas. For many Indian peoples, migration, specifically west of the Mississippi River, was not a new experience. Beginning during the closing decades of the eighteenth century, bands of Shawnees and Delawares moved to Spanish Louisiana pushed by the expansion of the Anglo-American frontier and attracted by continued profits in the fur trade and as military auxiliaries. Thus, when Thomas Jefferson acquired Louisiana in 1803, ties of kinship and common ethnicity already spanned the regions of the Great Lakes and the prairies west of the Mississippi River. The presence of earlier migrant communities of Shawnees, Delawares, Cherokees, and Kickapoos initially encouraged eastern Indians to see the West as a place where they could reconstruct a multitribal world away from the pressures of Anglo-American settlement and the meddling of local, state, and federal government officials. Of course, such hopes were short-lived.

Perhaps the most insightful and novel contribution of Bowes's book is his discussion of the political changes within Indian communities ushered in by removal. In the Old Northwest, the fur trade and missionization created a cadre of go-betweens who were well versed in the ways of both Indian and Anglo-American cultures. Prior to removal these individuals played influential roles in negotiations between their communities and the federal government. These men did much to shape the conditions of removal through treaty negotiations and by helping to ameliorate the woefully insufficient federal support for removal, but, for the most part, political power contin-

ued to rest with “traditional” leaders.

In the West, the one-time go-betweens reestablished their economic prominence and additionally pursued greater political influence among tribal communities. As a result, political divisions came to mirror economic and cultural divisions with these communities. Many had come to support removal because it promised new commercial opportunities in what might be a more legally secure environment. Notably, the northern reaches of Indian Territory were also economically dynamic as the Anglo-American frontier followed closely on the heels of the region’s Indian migrants. Bowes notes that while many removed Indians found the transition to Kansas a challenge, a few readily saw the economic opportunities of a region being rapidly integrated into a national marketplace. As settlers began to pour westward to California and Colorado, Indian entrepreneurs opened ferries, toll bridges, and inns to cater to them. Others quickly adapted the commercial agricultural practices they developed in the Midwest to their new western homes. As Anglo-American settlement itself began to encroach from the east, many entered into speculative real estate investment, working as boosters and promoters, often in tandem with local Anglo-Americans. Yet, as was the case among Anglo-Americans on America’s antebellum frontiers, Kansas’s removed Indians shared prosperity unevenly. Not all were in a position to prosper, and others rejected Anglo-American notions of prosperity altogether. Among the Delawares, many chose to remain active within the fur trade, which did not threaten traditional gender roles but which drew hunting parties farther and farther west in search of game. Others simply opted to sustain an economy oriented toward providing subsistence and preserving autonomy.

Economic changes were accompanied by dramatic political changes. The debate over slavery and congressional support for the economic development of the West brought new political threats to the status of the northern reaches of Indian Territory. The Kansas-Nebraska Act not only promised to make a portion of Indian Territory a battleground between proslavery and antislavery forces but also threatened the status of the tribes located in what would become Kansas Territory. The issue of how to fit into the expanding Republic exacerbated political and economic divisions within these communities. In 1855, Wyandot political leaders, fearing removal and the loss of their investments and improvements, signed a treaty exchanging their special tribal status and communal landholding for U.S. citizenship and individual property holdings. The Delawares turned to allotment only

reluctantly when it became clear that federal officials would not protect their treaty reserve from the illegal encroachments of settlers. Allotment and private property law appeared to be the only means of effectively retaining their lands in Kansas in the absence of effective enforcement of federal Indian policy. In both the above cases, the majority of these communities opposed allotment and preferred the maintenance of tribal autonomy, even if that required removal to what remained of Indian Territory. In fact, many Wyandots, rejecting both citizenship and allotment, relocated to the Seneca reserve in Indian Territory where they eventually purchased a new tribal reserve. The divisions these choices created effectively divided tribal communities since those choosing U.S. citizenship effectively terminated their own tribal membership. Most of those making such a choice found that it was not enough to retain possession of their lands in Kansas.

But these experiences represent not only the fracturing of Indian communities but also the frustration of federal policy aims. The federal government hoped that removal would simplify relations with the Indian communities formerly of the Great Lakes by bringing their various bands and villages under unified and centralized “tribal” governments. Yet the political divisions and rivalries persisted. Indeed, these divisions in part explain how tribal entities could survive dispossession and “citizenship” to reconstitute themselves in the southern portions of Indian Territory.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of Kansas’s removed Indians for today’s descendants was not the loss of lands, yet again. Even as the federal government urged political reform and centralization on tribal governments, its failure to meet treaty obligations forced Indian peoples to pursue their own solutions to the encroachments of settlers and the marketplace. As they did, they discovered divergent paths. Some sought what would today be called termination, while others, and probably the majority, desired to maintain their special status as “domestic, dependent sovereigns.” These options were similar to those that Indian communities in the West would face in the eras of allotment and termination.

Bowes sets ambitious tasks for his study in its introduction. He proposes to place Indian removal to and from Kansas in a broad, national context, to study how internal dialogues shaped the experiences of these various communities, and to establish the significance of these experiences to the future legal and political battles concerning tribal sovereignty and governance. The study is the

most successful at the second of these. Having just read Daniel Walker Howe's Pulitzer Prize-winning *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (2007), I was continually making connections between Bowes's study and the broader themes and trends historians routinely associate with the era. But frequently connections to larger elements of the national narrative, such as the Second Great Awakening, the Transportation Revolution, and Jacksonian Democracy, are left implicit rather than made explicit. Similarly, although antebellum experiences with allotment and citizenship foreshadow the impact of allotment as general federal Indian policy at the end of the century, this relationship is hinted at rather than fully developed. For scholars who specialize in Native American history, it is not difficult to recognize. For those who are not specialists, the connection is not clearly illustrated.

My only significant criticism of this study is Bowes's use of the concepts "nation" and "power." "Power" is a theoretical concept much in vogue among scholars today, and Bowes employs this buzzword at various places in his study. But aside from a brief discussion of power and world systems theory in the introduction, there is little sustained critical engagement with the scholarship that has defined or developed it as a theoretical concept. Clearly, Indian peoples had the power to me-

diate and contest federal policy, but it is also true that the power relationship between Indian governments and the federal government was fundamentally unequal, greatly to the advantage of the latter. Also, Bowes demonstrates that local actors, both Indian and Anglo-American, were often able to ignore national policy at specific times and places. But even so, they were rarely ever able to fundamentally challenge the sovereignty of the federal government. So, how does Bowes hope to change or elaborate our understanding of power relationships both within Indian communities and between those communities and the federal government? Furthermore, how are the lessons of power in this instance applicable to our broader theoretical understanding of it? It is unclear.

Bowes's story is a complex one, actually in many ways at least four somewhat interwoven complex stories. Frequent digressions, sometime awkward organization, and occasional repetitiousness can make following these parallel stories challenging. But this book is provocative and is worth the work. It suggests to the informed reader that Indian removal did not so much remove Indians from the national stage, but rather thrust them onto another part of it. It also suggests how Indian communities in the future would be damaged by allotment and "citizenship," but also how they would artfully use federal Indian law to survive them.

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Citation: Alan Shackelford. Review of Bowes, John P., *Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West*. H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. January, 2009.

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