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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Unaffected by the Gospel: Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion, 1673-1906: A Cultural Victory. By Willard Hughes Rollings

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/01b8f4fg>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 28(4)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2004-09-01

DOI

10.17953

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authority of Western scholarship. Instead, “The authority [of this work] will rest with the tried perspectives and practices of ancient heritages” (133).

Such pronouncements do not change the fact that contrary evidence exists. Contact with Westerners brought change. As desirable as it might be to claim Western contact had only a negligible impact on Nuu-chah-nulth life, such a claim must be substantiated with more than Umeek’s recollection and an appeal to his indigenous perspective and the practices of ancients, especially when one is building a theory of *Tsawalk*. (In a startling remark that reveals a further inconsistency in the author’s work, Umeek contradicts himself and concedes that “the theory of *Tsawalk*, at this point in time, must utilize the same research methods, strategies, and measurement instruments as other theories” [131].)

And this takes us back to where we started—to Derrida. Big theory does not just explain everything; it seeks to be the catalyst for social and political change. In an interview published in *The New York Times*, Stanley Fish told writer Emily Eakin, “There was a general desire [among big theorists] for there to be a political payoff for theoretical formulations. The hope was to revolutionize the world” (“The Theory of Everything, R.I.P.,” 17 October 2004). This is certainly true of *Tsawalk*. Umeek’s goal is not to provide an understanding of traditional and contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth belief and culture. His goal is to develop a comprehensive indigenous theory of everything that will make clear the inadequacy of Western thought, science, and society and offer an authentic alternative that will result in a better world. The motive for developing this rather disjunctive and unsupported theory of *Tsawalk* can be found in Umeek’s dire assessment of the contemporary Western world. He argues that a paradigmatic change must begin immediately or we will face the extinction of the human species (66). It is Umeek’s theory of *Tsawalk* that will bring about this transformation to “a postmodern perspective” and save humankind.

What he offers in *Tsawalk*, however, is not the palliative he envisions. Origin stories are tools for understanding one’s world and are expressions of a community’s worldview; they are not substitutes for rigorous philosophical reflection. Accordingly, Umeek never builds a meaningful theory of *Tsawalk*, and what he does offer will not provide the model for the usurpation of Western culture and global transformation. In the end, big theory did not work for Derrida, Foucault, and Barthes. It does not work for Umeek either.

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Unaffected by the Gospel: Osage Resistance to the Christian Invasion, 1673–1906: A Cultural Victory. By Willard Hughes Rollings. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. 255 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

Willard Rollings, an associate professor of history at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, part Cherokee, has written an interesting account of the Osage Nation, tracing the effects of colonial contact and conquest. In particular, Rollings

describes the missionaries' phenomenal lack of success among the Osages until well into the twentieth century. His main point is that the Osage people marshaled the cultural resources needed to fend off all missionary efforts to convert them for a lengthy period of time through a combination of historical circumstances, an innate affinity for political maneuvering, and an enduring will to maintain their own culture and its articulated set of religious values.

In his first two chapters Rollings traces a general history of the Osage Nation through the period that most concerns him: from the first known Euro-Western contact with the nation through the beginning of the twentieth century. He demonstrates the growing pressures created by European settlers' conquests east of the Mississippi River and by the Spanish to the south and southwest as the spread of Euro-Western settlement pushed tribes native to those regions onto lands bordering on and intruding into Osage territory—west of the Mississippi and south of the Missouri rivers. The Osage succeeded in slowing down this phase of the conquest of the continent, using their political savvy and military prowess to thwart both Spanish and English/US ambitions for more than a century. More to the point, Rollings describes how the Osage used the missionaries as political pawns to manipulate US agents in negotiations with both the US government and other tribes.

The next five chapters (three devoted to Protestant efforts and two focused on Roman Catholic efforts) describe the sequential attempts of Protestants and Catholics to missionize the Osages. The first Protestant missionaries arrived in 1820 and withdrew from Osage territory seventeen years later. The Jesuits began in earnest only after the Protestant effort and endured longer only because of an increasingly white settler population that benefited from their ministrations far more than the Osages, who largely rejected the Catholic attempts as readily as they had those of the earlier Protestants.

In both cases the missionaries never understood the cultural differences between the Osage and their worldview and the worldview and value systems of Euro-Western Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant. As a result, these stark differences and the resulting cultural faux pas the Europeans regularly committed contributed to the Osage need to maintain distance between themselves and their visitors. For instance, the spiritual nature of the division between men's and women's work (something not fully understood even by Rollings, by the way) was violated in the missionaries' insistence that Indian men learn Euro-Western-style agriculture and crop production.

The missionaries, whose primary federally funded goal was to create schools precisely to separate children from their cultural heritage and to inculcate Euro-Western cultural values, never understood the Osage reluctance to give up their children to live full-time with strangers whose cultural values were so radically different from their own. Moreover, the strict regime forced upon Indian children in the mission schools, reducing them to production workers in the missions' self-subsistence efforts, meant that Indian children failed to thrive in those environments. Further, the Euro-Western missionary proclivity for using corporal punishment to discipline children violated strict cultural norms among the Osage. All of this led Osage peoples to be less inclined to trust their children to these strangers' care.

Rollings is fairly successful in his brief attempts, especially in chapter six, to demonstrate the deep complexity of Osage ceremonial life and its radical difference from the missionaries' religious and theological understandings. But his real strength is his persistent demonstration of the power of economic well-being in determining Osage prospects at each historical point along the way. Thus when the Osage did begin their slow transition to Euro-Western acculturation and conversion to different forms of religious life, the movement toward conversion came about more as a result of the destruction of the native Osage economy than from any genuine desire to embrace the colonizer's religion or any other. In their first movement toward conversion at the end of the nineteenth century, the Osage came to embrace peyote rather than either the Protestant or Catholic options the colonizer presented. Rollings closes his study with a brief description of early Osage peyotism, touching on the "east moon"- "west moon" division and emphasizing the Osage ability to define even this new religion on their own cultural terms. Thus the import of his subtitle: "A Cultural Victory."

As the title indicates, his history of the Osage people ends in 1906. This is unfortunate in that Rollings leaves the impression that this date represents the final change in Osage culture and community life. Unfortunately, the colonizer's missionaries seem today to have finally won out over indigenous culture and forms of prayer. In part, this later Osage concession has come about as a result of the continued mixing of blood (spoken by a mixed-blood Osage). Very few full-bloods and only a single genuinely fluent native speakers of the Osage language remain. Today, even Osage expressions of the Native American Church (peyote meetings) seem to have been taken over by a Christian evangelical faith that would have appalled Black Dog and Claremore. Most peyote meetings among the Osage have increasingly adopted Jesus and the Euro-Western notion of God as father. Even at In-lon-shka, people's prayers almost always begin with "Dear heavenly father," an address that would have confounded their Osage ancestors who always called on Wa-kon-da as Grandfather and Grandmother, as balanced reciprocity. This is a part of the story that also deserves to be told.

In spite of the sharpness with which Rollings describes Osage cultural defenses during the more than two centuries of resistance, he fails in one respect, which impairs the book's usefulness: Throughout, Rollings embraces and parrots too much of the conventional understandings (or misunderstandings) of Osage history, a problem that means most readers will learn or reinforce a false understanding that is all too present in the conventional narratives of Osage history and culture. As a result, we are left with an unresolved contradiction between Osage who delight in "raids," military endeavors aimed at territorial expansion, and conquest on the one hand and the need for an intense two-week ceremony in preparation for engaging in a tribal war on the other (71). Although Rollings is obviously sympathetic to the Osage in relating much of this history, he falls into the conventional pattern of reporting Osage military actions in terms of characteristic cultural proclivities for battle. He clearly pays attention to the international pressures of Euro-Western colonial encroachments on Indian lands, yet he falls into

patterns of easily characterizing the Osage (and other tribes as well) as having a proclivity for violence.

We have yet to see a history of the Osage that cuts across the grain in a postcolonial modality that is critically analytical as it looks at the evidence of white colonial spokesmen. The naive (or self-serving, colonial) assumption that Osages and other tribal peoples of the Plains were inherently given over to constant conflict with one another and bloodshed merits a new analytical look, and Osage historians (such as Louis Burns, *A History of the Osage People*; John Joseph Matthews, *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*) begin to point us in that direction. They at least tend to be much more nuanced in their use of language.

The University of New Mexico Press should be excoriated for the indexing job; it is inadequate to the point of being useless and even misleading. In the case of the words that *are* noted, only around 25 percent of occurrences seem to be listed, including those for many names of tribes. For instance, the index lists two occurrences for Thomas McKenney. I counted more than half a dozen others, variously listed in the notes as Thomas, Thomas L., T. L., or Col. T. L. McKenney.

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The Whales, They Give Themselves: Conversations with Harry Brower Sr.
Edited by Karen Brewster. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004. 248 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

The lives of the Iñupiat of Alaska's North Slope are the topic of numerous informative and interesting publications, and this oral biography of Harry Brower Sr. (1924–1992; Iñupiaq name Kupaaq) is a welcome addition. In the Arctic, traditional values are not a political football but the key to survival. Because of their heightened importance, these values can take on a life of their own. The Iñupiaq way of life is personified in the biographies of certain key individuals who have gained prominence both within and beyond their local community (see, for example, *Kusiq: An Eskimo Life History from the Arctic Coast of Alaska* by Waldo Bodfish, ed. William Schneider; and *Sadie Brower Neakok* by Margaret Blackman). This is also the case for Harry Brower Sr. as presented in *The Whales, They Give Themselves: Conversations with Harry Brower Sr.*

By joining in the daily activities of the Barrow community—such as visiting, sharing native foods, attending feasts and gatherings, and learning skin sewing and traditional dancing—and through her close friendship and collaboration with Harry Brower Sr., Karen Brewster has gained an understanding of Iñupiaq culture. In this book Brower, in his own way, personifies the culture. Important aspects of what it means to be a North Slope Native resident during the 1950s, 1960s, and into the new millennium are reflected through the prism of his life story. The story also reflects facets of the Brower's