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**Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845.** By Cary Miller. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010. 328 pages. \$50.00 cloth.

The Anishinaabemowin term *ogimaag* is usually taken to mean “chiefs” in English translations. But, as Cary Miller points out, Anishinaabe people use different terms to distinguish between hereditary leaders (*ogimaag*), elders and headmen (*gichi-anishinaabeg*), war leaders (*mayosewininiwag*), and religious Midewiwin leaders (*gechi-midewijig*). Miller’s pointed use of Anishinaabe terminology, evident not only in her choice of title but throughout the book, underscores the fact that Anishinaabe people conceptualize power and leadership very differently than outsiders have typically presumed.

*Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760–1845* is a work of revisionist ethno-history that combines information obtained from secondary historical sources, classic ethnographic texts, and archival records produced by missionaries, fur traders, and colonial officials in order to shed new light on the complex realities of Anishinaabe leadership in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Miller suggests that most European and Euro-American observers—anthropologists and historians included—have tended to view American Indian leaders as relatively weak, lacking control over land and its uses and operating outside of the religious sphere. Miller successfully demonstrates that this was not the case. While Anishinaabe political systems have often been described as acephalous, or lacking a governing head, Miller argues that these systems “were neither weak nor random but highly organized and deliberate” (4). And, while outsiders have regularly misinterpreted the flexible structure of Anishinaabe leadership as implying a lack of structure, in reality such flexibility was a significant source of strength and inter-village integration. Miller’s brief synopsis of how and why Anishinaabe leadership came to be so misunderstood by outsiders is likely to be especially beneficial for students and nonspecialists seeking to understand the significance of this problem: because Europeans carelessly affixed the term *chief* to any influential individual within a Native community, their descriptions (which form the bulk of standard historical records) tell us little about how Anishinaabe people viewed their own leaders.

Miller focuses a significant amount of attention on the previously neglected religious dimensions of Anishinaabe leadership. Their authority, she suggests, derived from two overlapping sources: heredity claims and charismatic religious claims. As *Ogimaag*’s numerous examples confirm, these ascribed and achieved patterns of leadership regularly intertwined so that very often the most powerful leaders were individuals who drew on both patrilineal hereditary positions and their own proven abilities in warfare and/or religious leadership. In order to make her case, Miller begins with a valuable—although necessarily abridged—overview of Anishinaabe notions of power. For Anishinaabe

people, power was thoroughly intertwined with spiritual connections with *manidoog* (spiritual beings). As such, “no performance of any task, whether in the service of subsistence, war, peace, or even love, was interpreted as due to an individual’s own abilities or efforts” (23). Success in any pursuit was therefore inherently also a demonstration of access to spiritual power.

Miller goes on to meticulously assemble information concerning three different types of Anishinaabe leaders: *ogimaag*, *mayosewininiwag*, and *gechimidewijig*. Although explicating the interrelationship between the types of Anishinaabe leadership and authority is the stated goal, the majority of the book systematically catalogues the available material associated with these leadership types. The exception is the fifth and final chapter, which offers a rich narrative summary of a contest for chiefly authority between two men, Nindipens and Maangozid, which occurred in 1836–1837 within the Anishinaabe community at Fond du Lac. For the first time, the reader is transported to a past time and place in order to witness the multifaceted, flexible, and therefore contestable nature of Anishinaabe leadership in this period. A clear image of how Anishinaabe leadership changed in response to the intense pressures of colonization begins to come into focus; the new role of medal chiefs and the possibilities for using Christianity to enhance authority were now factored into an already complex equation.

*Ogimaag* contains a wealth of information about historical Anishinaabe leadership. Readers seeking a comprehensive sourcebook are likely to be undeterred by the book’s several shortcomings. For example, although Miller alludes to the massive amount of cultural change wrought by colonialism, she does not adequately address how and why Anishinaabe leadership changed between 1760 and 1845. As well, many of *Ogimaag*’s numerous examples are drawn from classic historical and ethnographic works, yet these sources’ specific geographical and temporal context is not always taken into account. As a result of this combination of deficits, casual readers are implicitly led to believe that Anishinaabe leadership was essentially the same over a vast area of space and time. In the introduction Miller specifically warns against depicting worldviews as static and rigid, so clearly she knows well this was far from true.

For readers interested in understanding the meaning and process of ethnohistory, *Ogimaag* raises more questions than answers. A more thorough methodological discussion would have been strengthened both Miller’s arguments about the nature of Anishinaabe leadership and the value of this work to the ethnohistorical endeavor. The author celebrates the incorporation of Anishinaabe views and proclaims her use of Anishinaabe oral literature and scholarship to support interpretations that reflect the indigenous cultural context, yet in the text itself such viewpoints are relatively few and far between. In some instances, generalized Anishinaabe views are offered with no

indication of their origin. For example, Miller writes that “elders today report that the past and its customs are recoverable for the Anishinaabeg through dreams” (31) and that “some contemporary Anishinaabeg doubt the historical presence of hereditary leadership” (66). These points are certainly relevant, but problematically, the reader remains uninformed regarding whose views these are and how they entered the text.

*Ogimaag* skillfully interweaves primary archival sources with secondary historical and ethnographic ones, but unfortunately, Miller’s reconsideration and analysis of historical Anishinaabe leadership patterns in one period of time and Anishinaabe ideas of power is not carried into the present, even though Miller recognizes it is important for American Indian communities today to revive “strategies of the past to cope with the problems of the future” (3). The book would have benefited from engagement with more recent ethnographic studies that address the complex and contested nature of Anishinaabe leadership today (such as Larry Nesper’s 2002 *The Walleye War*). Indicative of her close attention to a particular historical period as well as a desire to portray Anishinaabe culture as living and dynamic, in several passages she slips between use of the present tense and the past tense. This tension in Miller’s treatment of this topic begs for a unification of past and present that never arrives. Similarly, including ethnographic interviews with living tribal leaders, elders, and citizens would have ensured a place for this book not only on scholars’ shelves, but also among Native individuals seeking to gain a fuller appreciation of the contemporary value of Anishinaabe leadership traditions.

Overall, *Ogimaag* is a welcome addition to Anishinaabe ethnohistory and essential reading for serious scholars of Anishinaabe history and culture. Miller successfully demonstrates that, far from limiting the effectiveness of Anishinaabe leaders, flexibility and lack of coercive authority were valuable advantages in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century context. Miller also successfully proves that “sociopolitical authority and religious authority in Ojibwe society had overlapping borders, blended, and became inseparable” (174). In providing the compelling narrative often needed to captivate undergraduate and lay readers that other chapters of *Ogimaag* lack, chapter 5 in particular illustrates all of Miller’s key points in an accessible and enjoyable manner. This chapter will be useful as a standalone addition to advanced undergraduate course readers. By emphasizing the complex nature of Anishinaabe leadership and because many of the same misunderstandings complicate relationships between Anishinaabeg and outsiders today, students of contemporary Anishinaabe life will find Miller’s analysis of historical leadership valuable in illuminating recent events and ongoing struggles.

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