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Peer reviewed

The Ioway in Missouri, by Greg Olson. Missouri Heritage Reader. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. xvi, 139 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$14.95 paper.

Reviewer Tanis C. Thorne teaches history and directs the Native American Studies minor at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author of *Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri to the Removal Era* (1998).

The Ioway in Missouri, a fine new volume in the Missouri Heritage Reader Series, succeeds admirably in making culture and history accessible to new adult readers. The writing is lucid and concise. The scholarship is precise and thorough. The text is embellished with many maps and photos, a creation story, classic portraits of Indian leaders, and an epilogue on contemporary Ioway people. The book's content is broader than the title suggests, for this is a regional history of the wide-ranging Ioway Indians. It details the early fur trade, diplomatic relations, and treaty cessions, as well as intertribal relationships. The homelands of the Ioway in present-day Iowa and Missouri were an intercultural borderland, a place of contact, collision, and change. Prominent historical figures such as Major Stephen Long and Benjamin O'Fallon share the spotlight with Black Hawk, White Cloud, and No Heart. The author is at his best when he engages the reader in the historian's craft (51), asking rhetorical questions about human motivation and causation.

The focus of this book is the years of precipitous and tragic decline from 1800 to 1840. In the 1700s, with their mixed economy of horticulture and hunting and flexible diplomacy, the Ioway, who were rich in "red catlinite," the stone used to make the bowls for calumet (or "peace") pipes, likely enjoyed an enviable position in an intertribal exchange network. The acquisition of labor-saving tools, weaponry, and horses strengthened their sovereignty over homelands along the Des Moines River and in the watershed southward (in what is now Missouri). In the long run, participation in the fur trade drew the Ioway into violent rivalry with the Sauk and Meskwaki. By the time the Americans began building forts along the Missouri River, there was such intense intertribal warfare for diminishing hunting territory that the major policy goal was to stem this violence. Olson makes a persuasive argument that U.S. diplomacy did nothing to quell the accelerating violence within and between tribes, nor the alcohol abuse, hunger, or desperation. Poverty — and an abysmal lack of alternatives — drove the Ioway chiefs to cede territory in treaties from 1825 to 1850. Those treaties permitted the Ioway to pay debts to traders, but also reduced the available hunting area. Young men, seeking acclaim as warriors and hunters, rebelled against their leaders' injunctions to keep the peace.

One might wish for more information about the enormously complicated seasonal movements of the Ioway and more specific demographic data. Women are largely invisible in this book, and the activities of non-Indian men get more attention than is appropriate for a tribal history book. Given the author's sources and objectives, such omissions and emphases are understandable.

What is perhaps most unsettling and thought provoking about the book is its framing. History, after all, is engaging because it is useful. The past mirrors the present. The Ioway became "helpless victims" in a changing world (4), Olson writes in the book's introduction. Thus, he deliberately frames the trajectory of Ioway history as a descent into lives freighted with humiliation, despair, and violence. Such was the undeniable historical experience of American Indians. The author gazes into the heart of darkness as one unable to avert his eyes from a car wreck. Rather than reifying the outdated and ethnocentric western history about the triumph of superior civilization over savagery, however, Olson maintains a respect for the Ioway and offers scrupulously objective interpretations of conflicts. Is Olson urging us to maintain our balance on this fertile, river-laced land, or face a similar fate?