

Red Dreams, White Nightmares: Pan-Indian Alliances in the Anglo-American Mind, 1763-1815

By Robert M. Owens

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Pp. xi, 243. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.95.)

In an era when historians are recovering indigenous voices lost in time to the biases of an America-centric historiographical tradition, Robert M. Owens deliberately writes about American Indian history from a non-Indian perspective. However, Owens's book is far from reactionary. Instead, it offers a fascinating analysis of the settler collective psyche, which, especially from 1763 to 1815, was tormented by a fear of being overwhelmed by a Pan-Indian alliance, one potentially fomented by Great Britain. A profound sense of dread, horror, or danger was, according to Owens, the motivation for federal Indian policy in the decades following the 1783 Treaty of Paris. As such, Owens asserts that *Red Dreams, White Nightmares* "is a story about fear" (p. 5). It is also a story about a powerful yet dysfunctional nation—the United States of America—and how it turned its endemic fear of Indians into the foundation of its political identity.

"Indian attacks," Owens writes, "constituted perhaps the most universal fear for Americans in the Colonial, Revolutionary, and Early Republican eras" (p. 6). Unsurprisingly, this fear of organized Indian attacks fed a national paranoia of ongoing plots and conspiracies perpetrated by agents of the British crown, not to mention the French and Spanish, all of whom pre-

sumably had their reasons for hastening the demise of the newly liberated nation. Because the United States is such a formidable nation today, it is easy to forget that it was once a ragtag nation of farmers and merchants, scarcely able to pay for its own governance. Feeling itself surrounded by hostile nations and insecure borders, Owens writes, the U. S. engaged in a campaign of nation-building that was less a struggle for liberty than it was a frantic response to fears of foreign plots and Indian uprisings.

Owens's discourse moves swiftly from Pontiac's seminal eighteenth-century rebellion to the confusions and failures of British diplomacy as Britain lost its grip on its American colonies. Consequently, Britain created divisions among tribes that would generate repercussions felt through the end of the War of 1812. More specifically, Britain was simultaneously concerned with preempting a northern and southern tribal alliance while trying to suppress an American rebellion. The United States, in turn, would assume with its independence the worrisome prospect of a Pan-Indian alliance in its territorial disputes with British Canada, Spanish Florida, and France, which did not leave North America entirely after the French and Indian War.

Hopefully, though, if Owens writes a sequel to *Red Dreams, White*

Nightmares he will incorporate indigenous perspectives, which can add insight into America's Pan-Indian fears, as well as counterbalance his unexpected sympathies for Andrew Jackson and William Harrison as expressions of the settler mindset. Did the tribes following Tecumseh, for example, comprehend the fear that they were inflicting on the settlers? If so, how did they use it to their advantage? Did settler fears vary according to the distance they were from Indian lands? As it is, Owens's historical account of fear as a basis of American national identity is the start of an urgent conversation about

how exceptionalism depends on the disparagement of others, particularly those regarded as un-American and un-assimilable.

DAVID MARTÍNEZ (Gila River Pima) is an associate professor of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University. He is also the author of *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (2009) and the editor of *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972* (2011). He is currently working on an intellectual biography of Standing Rock Sioux activist-intellectual Vine Deloria Jr.

