

Unaffected by the Gospel



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The Osage were fierce warriors who seized control of most of present-day Missouri and Arkansas in conflicts with other tribes. Against Euro-American invaders, however, they adopted nonviolent resistance. Even though their territory steadily diminished, and the tribe was relocated to a small strip in northern Oklahoma, the tribe's cultural and religious beliefs and practices survived. Willard Hughes Rollings claims Osage nonviolent resistance was a successful strategy for cultural preservation. By avoiding war they avoided military defeat and were better able to minimize the compromises forced upon them. Living among competing colonial powers, they successfully manipulated imperial rivalries. For most of the nineteenth century the Osage were the targets of intense missionary activity, part of the American goal to relocate and acivilizea them. Here, too, the tactic of passive resistance served them well. Earlier scholars claimed that while the Protestant missionaries failed in their efforts to convert the Osage, the Jesuits succeeded. Rollings shows, however, that neither Protestants nor Catholics had any real success in converting the Osage to Euro-American Christianity.

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