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that vanished in the late nineteenth century. To me, the real beauty of *Telling Stories the Kiowa Way* comes from knowing some of the people whose voices come to life throughout the book

There are many tantalizing pieces of ethnographic and ethnohistoric information scattered throughout the text and in chapter endnotes. Notably, only nine of the fabled Ten Medicines bundles are left today since one burned up in the 1930s, a largely unknown fact. Some data, however, are inaccurate: for example, the last Sun Dance was actually performed in 1887, not 1888 (p. 98), the Sun Dance was not an annual event (p. 99), and the Kiowa Ghost dance began in 1890, not in the 1880s (p. 91). Another concern is that it is unclear whether many of the transcribed conversations were in Kiowa or English. Despite these minor discrepancies, Palmer has done a wonderful job of demonstrating how oral traditions contribute to the continued unfolding of the American Indian literary canon.

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Uncas, First of the Mohegans. By Michael Leroy Oberg. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. 268 pages. \$27.50 cloth.

Michael Leroy Oberg clears the fog and mist surrounding the name of the Connecticut Indian leader borrowed with as much purpose by James Fenimore Cooper for *The Last of the Mohicans* as was the name of Pequot by Herman Melville in *Moby Dick*. The name of Uncas resounds loudly in American literature, although few know the story of the Mohegan sachem who was so influential that his assassination became a matter of priority within New England administrative circles during the seventeenth century.

Through seven chapters, an extensive notes section, and index, Oberg pieces together the story of the Mohegan, Narragansett, Niantic, Pequot, Wampanoag, Sequin, Shinnecock, and other Algonquian peoples, and how their worlds were turned upside down by the invasion of English Puritans and the Dutch. Disease ravaged the land, reducing tribal populations by much as 80 percent, while the white population exploded and a new trade economy led to a dramatic transformation of social structures. Land became real estate and title became as important as religion during the period of English and Dutch expansion. Playing Indians against each other as competing allies and agents created a period of swindle, larceny, murder, and deceit that has few equals in American history. Rather than paint American Indians as hapless innocents tossed around by forces they could not understand, Oberg reveals the ability of such leaders as Uncas who sought to turn these new developments to the advantage of their people, for a time.

The names of Winthrop, Mason, Williams, Stone, Morton, Stanton, and the other players in the Puritan drama are represented in a new context as manipulative politicians rather than as "Founding Fathers" seeking religious freedom. Other authors have described the deeds and dramas of these figures

(for example, Richard Dirnnon's exemplary work *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building*, 1997). Oberg has pieced together the historic record of Uncas through the miasma of Puritan maneuvers during the Pequot War and King Phillip's War. This detailed deconstruction reveals Uncas as one of the greatest of American Indian leaders, who experienced lessons that would be relearned by tribes further west as America adapted the strategies developed in the destruction of the Indians of New England as a national policy. The insights of Uncas threatened the development plans of Europeans. His mastery of the new politics allowed him to insure the survival of his own people, although at a terrible price.

American Indian involvement in events that led to their destruction is a fascinating topic explored among California Indians by Randall Milliken in *Time of Little Choice*, 1995. Oberg demonstrates how American Indian leaders in New England quickly found themselves entangled in a cobweb of intrigue and counter strategies. Chapter two, "The Mohegan's New World," describes the effects of the colonists' economic interests on American Indians. Wampum beads moved from decorative and ceremonial use to something more akin to lucre, as the European concept of money transformed animal skins into investment opportunities. Expansion of new systems and networks complicated the scene, creating natural areas of conflict.

As both the English and the Dutch exploited Indians, the confusion of who did what and when soon had Indians retaliating against one another, rather than the other. Such confusion led to the famous death of the English scoundrel John Stone, whom the Pequots had taken for a Dutchman. The English used this death as an excuse to begin a war of expansion up the Connecticut River, which began with the slaying of the men of Block Island and the subsequent Pequot War. The region reverberated with war, expansion, loss of Indian sovereignty, new alliances of convenience or survival, and enough confusion to prevent a united Indian resistance.

When social norms are suspended, chaos gives rise to opportunity. Chapter three, "The Rise of the Mohegans," tells the tale of Uncas and the Mohegans striking alliances with the English. Like Milliken, Oberg stresses the destruction of the delicate balance of détente existing between neighboring villages and tribes, leaving Indians the chance to get the upper hand on former rivals and competitors. The Narragansett became victim to an alliance of the English and the Mohegan, leading to the death of their influential leader Miantonomi, whose head was cut in two. This atrocity transformed the life of Uncas into a quest for revenge on the Narragansett and their European allies.

The apt title of chapter four, "To Have Revenge on Uncas," describes the swirling currents of political events, agreements, betrayals, and scapegoating among both whites and American Indians, who soon lost sight of the source of their problems. Oberg points out that Puritan unity was almost as illusory as that among Indians. Colonies in Plymouth and along the Connecticut River competed with Roger Williams and others, seeking to gain the upper hand on rival settlements. Uncas was attacked and almost killed by another Indian who tried to put the world back into balance through murder. The attack on Uncas

was a blow against the English, who depended upon his forces. Revenge on Indian plotters was also a move against the Europeans with whom they were allied. It's easy for the reader to lose the complexity of Uncas' transformation from Native leader to figurehead, and from strategist to compromised scapegoat.

Oberg does an excellent job of developing portraits of Uncas and others while following them through the snakepit of manipulation and strategy. Lessons learned in this conflict created a new way of conquering Native land by using the Natives themselves. This did not end with King Phillip's War and laid the groundwork for white strategy during the French and Indian Wars and the expansion of the United States into the world of the Plains Indians.

Oberg concludes by emphasizing how the legacy of Uncas remains among the Native population in a New England that sought their utter extinction. The arcane nature of the politics encountered by Uncas and other Natives parallels modern conflicts in Kosovo and the Middle East. American support of dictatorships in Iran and Iraq and the arming of Afghans against the Russians, followed by the invasion of Afghanistan, display a similar deadly mixture of confusion, exploitation, and eventual loss of control for the historically minded reader. Uncas learned that to keep his people safe he had to ally against other Natives. He risked being seen as a traitor, a lackey, or worse. He learned the art of compromise and political decision in an international arena. To this day Uncas is both blessed and blamed by opposing traditions in New England's Native communities. His positive contribution lies in the presence of his tribe as active members of an influential community living on their land. His infamy remains in the hurt and dark memories of neighboring tribes with whom he warred.

The death of Uncas was neither noted nor mourned by the colonists once his service to them was completed. He was discarded—but his name and efforts live on. His actions united disparate factions of Indians, allowing them to survive the holocaust that could not be prevented

Uncas, First of the Mohegans offers an excellent and much-needed look at the beginnings of the United States, bringing to light personalities and events that have faded from popular perception, leaving only names and landmarks to reinterpret as milestones in a dimly perceived story. Cooper's use of Uncas as a character whose virtues are turned against him, resulting in his death at the hands of another Indian while defending English womanhood, is transformed by Oberg into an insightful allegory of early New England history. This real story, better than any fiction, provides a powerful example of the consequences of destroying a culture in the name of imperial expansion.

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