Pawnee Treaties of 1833 and 1857

Why Do Some Treaties Fail?

Viewpoints

Pawnee Nation: Disadvantages	United States Government: Desires
The four confederated bands of the Pawnee Nation, who called themselves the Chaui, Kitkahahaki, Pitahawirata, and Skidi, claimed as their homeland the central plains encompassing parts of what is now called Nebraska and Kansas. The nineteenth-century Pawnee, like other Native Nations, had tough choices to make regarding their physical and cultural survival. Around the 1830s the Pawnee experienced a variety of hardships. First, the United States pushed displaced tribes from the East into Pawnee lands, causing tribal conflict. Second, in 1831 a devastating smallpox epidemic struck, taking with it about half of the Pawnee population. Third, encroachment of white settlers and displaced Indian tribes made it difficult to hunt enough buffalo to sustain themselves. In October, with few alternatives, the Pawnee Nation agreed to meet with a U.S. treaty delegation.	In an effort to make more Indian lands available for white settlement, the U.S. assigned a displaced eastern tribe, the Lenape, a portion of traditional Pawnee hunting lands on the plains. When a Lenape party entered the area to hunt buffalo, a Pawnee force drove them off, killing several of them. U.S. government officials decided to resolve the conflict that they had created with a treaty that would accomplish two goals. First, they wanted to acquire a large portion of Pawnee territory and turn it into a common hunting ground for the Pawnee and other Indians displaced by the federal removal policy. Second—to support the United States' and missionaries' campaigns of assimilation—the U.S. intended to subject the Pawnee to a civilization and religious-conversion program.

James Riding In, "The Betrayal of 'Civilization' in United States–Native Nations Diplomacy: A Case Study of Pawnee Treaties and Cultural Genocide." in *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*, ed. Suzan Shown Harjo (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2014) 153-155