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Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650

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a letter promising aid from the U.S. government, reflect on two centuries of broken promises, and then put thousands of his people at risk based on the claims of that letter? Was McIntosh driven to seek revenge because of the role Opothleyahola had played in the death of his father? When are real people portrayed as stock literary characters? At what level does the historical record inform the account, and at what level does the plot bridge the gaps in that record?

The Whites claim to tell their history from the Muskogee viewpoint, although they never state explicitly why their tale represents the Muskogee version of events. McIntosh would also claim a Muskogee perspective but would surely write a different history. The Whites did interview contemporary Muskogean people, but how these interviews shaped their narrative is uncertain. (They should also have given the contemporary Muskogee people who provided oral histories individual credit or explained why they did not.) To enhance the Native American aura of their tale, the Whites use no dates and few place-names. As events occur in the fall and winter of 1861–62, the lack of a time frame is not confusing, but the reader needs a good map of Opothleyahola's retreat route and of the battle sites. (Native Americans throughout history have drawn maps, so this should not have been a problem.) The Whites have also consulted standard anthropological sources. John Swanton's early-twentieth-century studies on southeastern peoples are frequently cited in references to spiritual beliefs or ritual practices. The Whites' belief that personal revenge is a basic element in Native American politics causes them to downplay the complexity of Native American government. Council meetings, a central part of the political process of consensus, are mentioned only in passing. In sum, the priority of story line over historiography will delight the general reader and frustrate the historian.

Native People of Southern New England, 1500–1650. By Kathleen J. Bragdon. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. *Civilization of the American Indian*, No. 221. xxvi + 301 pp., preface, introduction, illustrations, figures, maps, conclusion, notes, references, index. \$28.95 cloth.)

Laurie Weinstein, *Western Connecticut State University*

Years ago, as I was getting ready to embark on my graduate work on New England Indians, my dissertation adviser gave me her views on the subject matter. She envisioned New England Indian ethnohistory as a huge cauldron of a few facts and a lot of interpretations: every once in a while someone came along to stir the pot. Bragdon's book has stirred the pot.

Native People of Southern New England is a “must-read” for all of us in New England Indian studies.

Bragdon’s new interpretive paradigm not only uses some of the same “few facts” but also incorporates much that is new, including her work with Ives Goddard on the Algonquian language and a wealth of recent archaeological investigations. Her primary focus is the coastal New England Indians, whom she calls the Ninnimissinuok, adapted from the Narragansett word for “people.”

Bragdon’s book makes several significant breaks with previous interpretations about the subsistence strategies and sociopolitical organization of the New England Indians. During the 1970s and 1980s many scholars (e.g., Jennings, Salisbury, Axtell, and Thomas) saw native New Englanders principally as egalitarian farmers. Sachems ruled by consent and acted like petty big men. Even women were considered to have about the same status as men. These studies tried to correct for previous biases in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European interpretations (e.g., Gookin, Winslow, and Wood) that cast New England Indian culture in the same light as European culture, with its emphasis on national hegemonies and inequality on both domestic and public fronts.

According to Bragdon, the coastal Ninnimissinuok were never dependent on corn farming. Rather, farming was a “nonevent” that arrived during the very late Woodland period. Coastal dwellers lived in sachemdoms and maintained relatively high populations through such subsistence activities as fishing, gathering, and hunting. Farming became important when native populations rose and territories became restricted. With farming came population dispersal into individual “homesteads” or hamlets, which became the trademark of southern New England Indians. Further, Bragdon states that New England sachemdoms were stratified and included hereditary chiefs supported by hefty tribute payments. Sachemdoms also featured the “principal men” of each community; the “common people”; the *pniesesok*, who collected tribute for the sachems and led warriors into battle; the military leaders; and the servants or slaves. As these societies developed, Bragdon suggests, women’s status declined. She borrows the feminist theories of Karen Sacks, Eleanor Leacock, and Michelle Rosaldo, who note that as societies become more complex, women lose control over their productive and reproductive labor; their value as wives becomes more important than their value as “sisters.”

Bragdon’s chapter on kinship attempts to clarify a still little-understood picture of native social organization. Patterns of both patrilineal and matrilineal descent operated in southern New England. Chiefly status, in particular, traced its significance to ties to both sets of kinsmen (see

Mohegan sachem Uncas's genealogy). Bragdon suggests that the kinship systems were not unlike ambilineal systems, commonly associated with societies in transition (and thus with European contact, disease, and depopulation).

Bragdon's book is divided into ten chapters. The introduction briefly highlights the earliest documentary records about New England natives (e.g., Verrazzano, Gosnold, and Champlain), the twentieth-century scholarship about the culture area, the late prehistoric record (the Woodland period), and the linguistic record, as well as the problems with previous paradigms about New England sociopolitical organization. The introduction is followed by "Maize, Trade, Territoriality, and Wampum"; "The Quotidian World: Work, Gender, Time, and Space"; "Metaphors and Models of Livelihood"; "The Sachemship and Its Defenders"; "Kinship as Ideology"; "Social Relations and Gender Differences"; "Cosmology"; "Religious Specialists among the Ninnimissinuok"; "Ritual"; and "Conclusions." I highly recommend *Native People of Southern New England*.

The Six Nations of New York: The 1892 United States Extra Census Bulletin. Introduction by Robert W. Venables. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995. xxvii + 89 pp., introduction, illustrations, maps, tables, index. \$50.00 cloth.)

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Students of Iroquois history and culture who have had to rely on their dog-eared, faded photocopies of what is commonly referred to as the "Donaldson Report" will welcome this attractive reprinting of *The Six Nations of New York*. The most important and extensive census document on the Iroquois, it offers a detailed, comparative perspective of their communities and their relationships with the state and federal governments. Moreover, it was compiled at a critical time in Iroquois history, when assimilationist goals, including the dismantling of reservations and their land bases, dominated federal and state Indian policy.

The information in *The Six Nations of New York* was obtained primarily by special agent General Henry B. Carrington, under the direction of Thomas Donaldson of the U.S. Census Office and with the assistance of T. W. Jackson, U.S. Indian agent for the Six Nations. The report begins with a general introduction by Donaldson and an overview, accompanied by numerous tables and charts, of Iroquois legal status, population, churches, land values, vital statistics (marriages, divorces, "longevity," etc.), agricultural data, occupations, and the like.

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