# **UCLA**

# **American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

#### **Title**

Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History and Oral Traditions Teach Us about Their Communities and Cultures. By Lucianne Lavin.

#### **Permalink**

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/41z5785n

## **Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 38(4)

### ISSN

0161-6463

#### **Author**

Weinstein, Laurie

## **Publication Date**

2014-09-01

#### DOI

10.17953

# **Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Pila maya—you have honoured me Mitakuye Oyasin—everything is related To the east—where the sun begins the day.

Dana Claxton University of British Columbia

Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History and Oral Traditions Teach Us about Their Communities and Cultures. By Lucianne Lavin. New Haven: Yale University Press. 528 pages. \$50.00 cloth; \$25.00 paper.

This book is a timely and significant addition to New England archaeology. Not only does this book provide an in-depth discussion of Connecticut's prehistoric and historic records, but also provides an overview for interpreting all of southern New England archaeology. While *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples* does not purport to cover this entire region, bear in mind that the last major regional synthesis was done in 1980 by Dean Snow; this book is sorely overdue!

Very readable, Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples contains plenty of materials for both scholars and the general public. Chronicling from the Paleo-Indian period over 12,000 years ago through the contact cultural time periods in the early-seventeenth century, Lucianne Lavin's book also touches on current times to show the continuity between Connecticut's past natives and its present-day tribes. Each chapter begins with a chapter overview, discusses important events and artifacts for each cultural time period, and then adds an encyclopedic discussion of every site in Connecticut associated with that time period. A peek at the chapters will give the reader a context for understanding it.

Lavin begins with an overview of the history of archaeology in Connecticut that pays homage to predecessors such as Irving Rouse and Bert Salwen. As she points out, Connecticut's archaeological record is very much illuminated by both academics and "amateur" archaeologists. The author uses "amateur" as a term of the highest esteem; if it were not for the work of Ned Swigart, who founded the American Indian Archaeological Institute (now Institute for American Indian Studies), together with Lyent Russell, Dave Cooke, and many other advocates, Connecticut's prehistory would not be as well-known. This introductory chapter goes on to explain what it is that archaeologists do. Information about radiocarbon dating, palynology, dendrochronology, and geo-archaeology are discussed as methods for helping archaeologists interpret the sites.

Reviews 161

The chapter on the Paleo Indians (approximately 10,000 BP) looks at the controversies surrounding the first arrivals of the first Americans as well as a look at Connecticut's post-glacial environment. No discussion of the environment would be complete without a discussion of Northeast mastodons and fluted Clovis points. Lavin then discusses various Connecticut sites that showcase this cultural time period, such as the Templeton site in Washington and the Lover's Leap site in New Milford. Also included are photographs of the Paleo Indian tool kit and a sidebar on how fluted points are made. This chapter, as do the others, ends with "Interpretations and Questions," a section that comments on what the data suggest, alternative hypotheses, and the limitations of potential explanations.

Chapters on the Archaic (9,000 BP to 3,800 BP) are divided into the established periods of "Early," "Middle," "Late," and "Terminal," with highlights and significant sites from each. The emerging post-Pleistocene, with its warming environment and changing local conditions, provided new resources for Connecticut's Native peoples. New tool technologies make their appearance during the long Archaic, including ground stone tools used for woodworking and processing mast foods. The Early and Middle Archaic are not well known in Connecticut—like the preceding Paleo period, the data might be submerged due to rising sea levels as the glaciers melted, and archaeologists, as Lavin says, might be missing clues or misinterpreting the evidence.

Numerous sites and an abundance of artifacts throughout the region well represent the Late and Terminal Archaic periods (6,000 to 3,800 BP). Lavin provides sidebars illustrating the annual subsistence cycle with information about how archaeologists interpret seasonality. The Late Archaic in Connecticut is represented by two distinct cultural traditions: the Narrow Point Tradition of the southern Atlantic Coast and the Laurentian Tradition of the more northern regions. Laurentian groups made greater use of ground stone tools, medium-bladed points, cremation burials, and ritually "killed" artifacts, whereas the Narrow Point Tradition is represented by thick, small, narrow-stemmed points made from locally occurring stone, especially quartz and quartzite. By the time of the Terminal Archaic, Connecticut's Native peoples had developed well-established subsistence and settlement patterns. Two possibly distinct populations inhabited the area: the Narrow Point, in a continuation from the Late Archaic, and the Broad Spear tradition peoples who had distinctive point styles and tool kits. Broad Spear groups were some of the first to make stone bowls using steatite, or soapstone. The end of the chapter asks questions about the origins of the Broad Spear groups and discusses the controversy as to whether these groups are interrelated or truly distinct.

The Woodland cultural time periods (2,700 BP to AD 1,650) are also divided into "Early," "Middle" and "Late" periods, with chapters detailing sites,

tool kits, subsistence and settlement patterns, social relationships, and ritual. The first clay pots were made during the Early Woodland period. By the time of the Late Woodland, native cultures were making a variety of pots, farming, using the bow and arrow, and efficiently settling into their particular environments. As Lavin is a ceramicist, much emphasis is given to pot manufacture, styles, decorations, and chronologies. The Late Woodland chapter features a large color photographic inset that shows artwork, ceramic styles, lithic sourcing, basketry, and wampum, in addition to a chronology that ties point styles to their time periods.

The chapter on the Final Woodland period (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD) looks at how European contact began to impact Native culture all along the New England coastline. In this chapter and the last, Lavin, an expert ethnohistorical researcher, includes much documentary evidence such as maps, journals, letters, and other records, in addition to stories about the contact period from her interviews of contemporary Native elders. The author discusses the Beaver Wars, the wampum trade, and how natives incorporated items of European manufacture into their own cultures, such as the use of iron pots to make iron arrowheads. Although the Final Woodland did not leave much subsurface site data, there are many stone cairns that Lavin believes mark some kind of sacred knowledge.

The last chapter condenses a broad sweep of history—from the early-seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries—into just forty-five pages. Lavin employs three different court cases, the Quinnipiac, the Mahikan, and the Mohegan, to demonstrate how natives were swindled out of their lands and how they used a variety of strategies to fight back and preserve their autonomy. There is a section on the all-important seventeenth-century wars, such as the Pequot and King Philip's wars, together with information about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Native communities, such as the Lighthouse site in Barkhampsted and state-assigned reservations such as Schagticoke in Kent, and also important twentieth-century legal and cultural developments: detribalization, discrimination, land suits, and casinos. Since there are not a lot of site data from this time period—with the exception of the well-known work of Kenny Feder on the Lighthouse site and that of Kevin McBride on the Mashantucket Pequot reservation—Lavin must rely upon documentary evidence and native testimonies.

The book is highlighted by numerous sidebars that explain information in the text, whether about "magical pots and fertile mortars" (216) or about making a soapstone pot. The book is richly illustrated with maps, color photographs, and illustrations of artifacts such as pots, projectile points, and works of art. It is surprising that a book so elegant and comprehensive is also relatively inexpensive. Extensive footnotes clarify and add materials to the text.

Reviews 163

The book's bibliography alone is worth the cost, with up-to-date sources from books, journal articles, published and unpublished papers, presentations, and cultural resource management reports on Connecticut archaeology.

My only critique of this volume involves the author's attempt to sandwich so much of history into this last chapter. Yet I understand why: Native people are very much still here, and a book that abruptly ended in the seventeenth century would not establish that Native presence has a long and continuing past and present. Many people today subscribe to the myth that Native peoples vanished when Connecticut was settled, thinking that the Indians all died off from either conflict or disease. Jean O'Brien's 2010 book *Firsting and Lasting* critically deconstructs this mythology. Indeed, Natives are still here. As the reversal of the Schaghticoke Federal Recognition award demonstrates, our political leaders need to recognize this fact instead of wasting time and tax dollars disputing it.

Laurie Weinstein
Western Connecticut State University

The Fourth Eye: Māori Media in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ed. Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 312 pages. \$82.50 cloth; \$27.50 paper.

In the summer of 2003 I traveled to New Zealand to conduct archival research on Māori cinema. I was lucky enough to spend an afternoon with Barry Barclay, indigenous cinema pioneer and father of Māori cinema in New Zealand. In his little beachside "shack," as he called it, nestled into the Hokianga Harbor, he generously shared with me his thoughts about his work and the relationship between indigeneity and media. I was new to the field then—it wasn't even really a field at that time—and unfamiliar with much of the history that Barclay spoke about. I would have loved to have this collection to read before I went on the trip and began my research.

In this wide-ranging collection, "Māori media" means both media representations of Māori and media made by Māori. It attempts to map out a developing field of intellectual inquiry as well as a specific historical conjuncture. Theoretically well-informed by scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, the essays make thoughtful contributions to the growing body of work in indigenous media studies. The best of this research is infused with the spirit of cultural studies as it has been practiced by scholars in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Like much of that work, this collection