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Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians. By Amy C. Schutt. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. 264 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

In this insightful book, Amy C. Schutt traces the evolution of the Delawares during the period from 1609 to 1783, with an epilogue about the mid-nineteenth century. Schutt argues that several Algonquian groups that originally lived in the Hudson and Delaware River Valleys coalesced during this time and became collectively known as the Delawares (Lenape). According to Schutt, the alliances they formed among themselves, with other Indians, and with certain Euro-Americans had a “profound significance . . . in the shaping of the Delawares as a people” as they worked to protect their land claims (4). Schutt relies on numerous primary sources and builds on the works of scholars such as Jane T. Merritt, Nancy Shoemaker, and Gregory Evans Dowd to construct a fascinating narrative of Native agency during a tumultuous time.

Alliance formation was an important strategy for these Algonquians even before Euro-Americans arrived; after their arrival, alliance building became even more essential for Delaware survival. Schutt contends that alliance formation was the central tactic used by many Delaware groups to oppose land loss and construct a new role for themselves as Native mediators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When the Delawares moved west to escape Euro-American expansion they eventually gathered in the Ohio Valley with other Native peoples. Once there many Delaware leaders “used oral traditions to define their people as alliance builders who had claims to Ohio lands” (5).

Delawares formed alliances with groups such as the Shawnees and Wyandots in an attempt to obstruct the Iroquois Six Nations from extending their influence, as well as to secure Delaware land claims and their position as regional mediators. This reinvention of the Delawares as regional mediators was exemplified through the use of titles like “women” and “grandfathers,” names that set them apart as peacemakers. Delaware leaders also strengthened their historical connections with the Quakers and the Moravians, Euro-Americans known for their nonviolent stances, as part of this conscious strategy of “defining themselves as alliance makers” (5). Lacking the military and political influence of the Iroquois Six Nations, this strategy of alliance formation was a practical necessity for Delaware groups. Although the American Revolution ultimately foiled the Delawares’ plans, many of their relationships with other Indians lasted into the nineteenth century with the establishment of reservations, which many Delawares shared with other groups.

Schutt deftly works with a wide variety of sources to construct a concise and convincing argument. By focusing on alliance formation as the primary Delaware survival mechanism and nation-building tool, she sifts through much of the Eurocentric bias in the written records of this early period. In the process, Schutt reconstructs plausible scenarios with Native peoples as active participants at the center of the narrative. Admittedly, most Natives showcased in this book are leaders (sachems) like Teedyuscung and White Eyes,

but Schutt does not isolate those individuals. She demonstrates how closely linked leaders were with their kin networks and communities. Schutt manages to keep the fluidity of these Delaware communities at the forefront of her analysis. She stresses throughout the book that these communities, which included groups such as the Munsees and Unamis, were not static entities, and that this new Delaware status was deliberately constructed over time.

In her exploration of the gendered terms *women* and *grandfathers*, Schutt expands on arguments in Merritt's *At the Crossroads* (2003) and Shoemaker's *A Strange Likeness* (2004). Women and elders helped keep the peace in many Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic region Native societies. By accepting these labels, Delawares symbolically embraced their role as mediators and alliance builders in name and practice. The shift in terminology is most intriguing, with *grandfather* becoming more prevalent as time passed. Schutt notes that although both women and elders held positions of trust and authority in Native communities, to apply a female label to a man was ambiguous and depended entirely on the context (90). A warrior might object to a female designation, but a mediator or noncombatant might not. Although Natives generally recognized the important social and political role of women, Euro-American gender bias meant that identifying someone as female (even symbolically) was to label them as inferior to men (90). Therefore, Delawares strategically adopted the label of "grandfather" as a designation that both Natives and Euro-Americans respected, but without the ambiguities or biases of a female designation. Schutt contends that the "grandfather" label possessed connotations of respect, history, and links to a remembered past with whites that the Delawares hoped to access, a time when the founders of Pennsylvania first negotiated agreements with the Delawares (142). By invoking such a title, Delaware negotiators hoped to gain influence with both Native and Euro-American allies.

This focus on the Delawares as alliance builders and mediators also adds an interesting perspective to religious figures like the Delaware Prophet Neolin, discussed in works such as Dowd's *A Spirited Resistance* (1992) and *War Under Heaven* (2002). As Delawares situated themselves as regional Native mediators via these alliance networks, Schutt suggests that this reputation made other Indians in the Ohio Valley more inclined to listen to Delaware men and women claiming to be prophets (119–20). This interpretation offers an intriguing way to look at these individuals and may help explain why so many Native prophets during this time period and in this region appear to have been Delawares.

While there is much to admire in this book, the author raised certain issues that could have been explored in greater detail. Schutt only briefly discussed French involvement in the Ohio Country prior to the Seven Year's War. If alliance formation was as essential a tool as Schutt claimed, it seems like the French method of interacting with the Native peoples in the Great Lakes and the Ohio Valley, examined in books like Richard White's *The Middle Ground* (1991), would have made the French attractive allies for the Delawares. Schutt cites instances when the French failed to meet Delaware expectations prior to the Seven Year's War, which impacted their ability to trust the French (108). Despite this many Delawares ultimately sided with the French during that war. Examining the interactions between the Delawares

and the French in greater detail would have served as an interesting contrast to other Euro-American alliances that the Delawares sought.

Also, the question of how race affected Delaware groups is only lightly explored. As Merritt and Shoemaker have argued, the increasingly racialized early American frontier made alliances with Euro-Americans nearly impossible to maintain over time. Schutt agrees with these scholars, but she does not really examine how, if at all, this growing racial climate influenced the Indian-Indian alliances at the core of her study. She discusses how some Delawares adopted African-Americans into their kin networks despite white protests, which strongly suggests that Delawares had not fully internalized white racial constructs (152). However, when Schutt looks into the witchcraft accusations and the battles between Christians and non-Christian that divided certain Delaware communities, the question is implicitly raised whether or not race/ethnicity played a significant part in those divisions (154). Were “full-bloods” ever racially motivated to target Delawares of mixed descent? The fact that many Native prophets endorsed the idea of “separate creation,” and that witchcraft accusations and battles over Christianity focused heavily on eliminating white influences, suggests that race affected some Indian-Indian relationships. Again, Schutt approaches this topic in the book, yet she does not pursue it to its furthest extent.

Despite those minor criticisms, I believe that *Peoples of the River Valleys* provides a valuable contribution to the scholarship of the Delawares, as well as the history of the Early America. By focusing on alliance building, Schutt casts a renewed look at one of the most important tools in the survival of Native peoples.

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The Singing Bird: A Cherokee Novel. By John Milton Oskison. Edited by Timothy B. Powell and Melinda Smith Mullikin with a foreword by Jace Weaver. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. 240 pages. \$19.95 paper.

Largely neglected Cherokee author John Milton Oskison (1874–1947) expressed a youthful ambition to “let the world know about Indian Territory” (xix). Although he would leave that homeland permanently to attend Stanford University and pursue a lifelong career in letters, his previously unpublished and newly edited novel *The Singing Bird* achieves his aspiration to the degree that it opens a window on a crucial time and place in Cherokee history previously obscured not only by the passage of time but also by generations of assimilationist pressures. The effectiveness of Oskison’s narrative in illuminating the period directly before and after Cherokee removal to Indian Territory is also crucially enhanced by an indispensable introduction of contextualizing historical information and literary analysis provided by editors Timothy B. Powell and Melinda Smith Mullikin. The editors further serve Oskison’s—and his readers’—interests by making a persuasive case that,