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The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euramerican Relations. By Kenneth M. Morrison.

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The last three chapters detailing the contemporary period are very good. Prucha stresses that Indians *have* made sizable gains since 1960. For example, in terms of medical care, Indians have to some degree closed the "health gap" with their non-Indian counterparts, though they still have not achieved full equality in health care (p. 1149). Another major point that is often overlooked is that 49% of Indians today (1980 census) live in urban areas even if most white Americans think of Indians as reservation peoples. Questions about the status of these urban Indians must be addressed. And the future, as the next century approaches? Prucha feels that Indians must make economic progress to achieve self-determination and self-sufficiency. What Washington Irving wrote more than a century ago remains true today. To most white Americans the history of Indians in this country "is an enigma, and a grand one—will it ever be solved?" This long awaited, excellent study, helps considerably.

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The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euramerican Relations. By Kenneth M. Morrison. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. x + 256 pp. \$24.95 Cloth.

This study of French-English-Abenaki relations from early proto-historic contacts through Dummer's Treaty of 1725 is organized around an interpretive, explanatory, and judgmental focus connoted by the phrase "ideal of alliance," which is to say those styles of interpersonal interaction characteristic of the major parties engaged, considered as individuals, not as social actors. The dynamics of these interpersonal engagements, as portrayed by Morrison, turned on efforts to find mutually satisfactory accommodations between persons of different cultural backgrounds seeking (p. 4) "to find common ground and to take responsibility for their lives." The key dynamic emphasized, thus, consists of controversies between individuals arising out of fundamentally different ideal or normative values, which molded the ways they

treated one another. The study ends with the bold claim that the "moral parameters of alliance" have been exposed. Exactly what this means is none too clear.

To emphasize, this is not a study of Abenaki-English-French "alliances" as anthropologists or political scientists understand the term. Such studies of social bonding between families, extended kin-groups, specialized associations, communities, and larger political units rely on exacting, sophisticated analysis of actual (not normative) political-economic relations and of ecological and other factors, together with understanding of the cultural dimension, in the narrow sense of ethos stressed by this author. However, the nature of Abenaki social systems are an utter mystery to Morrison: his characterization of the social life of these Eastern Algonquians is at best sketchy, static, and overly idealized, as well as internally contradictory. The "Abenaki" are described in the configurationalist manner of Ruth Benedict's "Digger" Indians, as an idealized composite, "small-scale," indeed, tiny, isolated "family bands," lacking "political unity," with redistributive economies and an "individualistic religion." Known regional differences in social structure are ignored; and the possibility of any significant social change during the first century of contact is, for any useful analytic purpose, denied. This thin characterization of Abenaki institutions seems to draw more from Robert Redfield's *The Little Community* than a systematic effort to extract understanding of Abenaki society from primary sources. Be this as it may, the various Abenaki "family bands" (of no more than "twenty or thirty persons") simply could not regularly have marshalled military forces of a hundred or two hundred men and kept them in the field carrying out "Abenaki policy" without some kind of integrative political apparatus. What this was Morrison does not suggest.

The Abenaki, according to Morrison, are described as emerging from a century of new experiences—epidemic diseases, significant depopulation, loss of vital territories and resource base, technological transformation, adaptation to new economic specialties, incorporation into Euramerican economies as primary producers, migration, the disappearance of several whole communities, and repeated confrontations with Euramerican commercial fishermen, traders, missionaries, and political actors—as culturally pristine and unyielding in social structure. Thus the successful Jesuit subversion of Abenaki religious and political

roles—their large-scale conversions and efforts to develop miniature Paraguays in the Northeast, are interpreted as having little impact on core configurations of Abenaki culture, resulting merely in “spiritual” revitalization and a “syncretic” religion.

The author was led to such conclusions by his interpretative frame, which stresses contemporary popular-level social psychological constructions, not those of social anthropology. Whether validly attributed as characteristic “motives” to historic Abenaki and Jesuits or not, Morrison clearly favors social harmony, warm, close, positive personal interactions, equality, cultural relativism and pluralism, personal and small group autonomy, personal liberty, mutuality of decision making, open covenants openly arrived at, respectfully effective intercultural communication, and similar political-ethical slogans of our own cultural world. Applying these judgmentally to the main actors in this historic drama, the Abenaki obtain top scores, while the French, generally, and the Jesuits, especially, do very well. Not surprisingly, the Puritan fathers fail miserably. Why were the Jesuits so successful among the Abenaki? Because they sought close, personal, humane relations, and were warm, helpful, loving and kind. Why did the English fail to achieve “alliance.” Because they were unable to see the humanity of the Abenaki, and they consistently failed to understand their “motives.”

Carping about the policy decisions of contemporary government officials is one matter; but carrying this disposition into the past has certain risks. At the least, scholars sitting as judges of historical actors ought to strive for a fair balance. Certainly, they should establish firm evidentiary ground. Equally, they should not confuse their role as intellectuals with the obligations and expectations of long deceased functionaries. Especially, they must not identify with one participant at the expense of understanding the other. In this respect Morrison’s personal predilections and biases often seem too demanding to allow sound critical analysis.

His treatment of Richard Bellomont’s effort to resettle the Abenaki in New York is an example. Bellomont, working to reduce the stress on Massachusetts’s northern frontier, in 1700 sought to move the Abenaki out of a contested region, sweetening the pot with an offer of privileged trade relations. To that end the governor employed as intermediaries a group Morrison identifies uncertainly as “Skachkooks.” Presumably, these were the

Upper Hudson River Mahican (of Scaghtikoke), then well known (to Bellemont if not to his scholarly critic) as successful mediators between the interests of English settlers and fractious tribes. The mediation of these Mahican could have improved communications and eased the tension of negotiations, while giving both parties an opportunity to avoid open controversy. Morrison, his personal preferences evidently overcoming his understanding of broker roles or the delicacies of colonial-tribal negotiations, however, dismisses the Governor's action out of hand as the plan "least likely to succeed" (p. 150). Why so? The author had often lauded the French and the Jesuits for being successful in precisely the same tactic. Belomont was fully aware that his French adversaries had gained much from similar policy initiatives. Why was his not a diplomatically wise, ingenious, pacific gesture, as well as a possibly strategic political-economic maneuver?

One of the author's errors is to confuse the instrumental means of individuals in key roles with personal motives or values. The tactics of actors such as the Jesuits (living amidst and learning Abenaki languages) were well defined tactics for implementing the policy goals of their order. These were apparently successful when applied to the Abenaki, certainly far more so than was true of other Indian societies. Similarly, not utilizing the concept of role, Morrison seems to believe that Abenaki political and religious leaders were different individuals, not recognizing that the same Abenaki leaders often had achieved the social identities of powerful shamans. Thus the author does not appreciate that Jesuit successes in discrediting Abenaki religiosity also weakened their political order.

But even more disabling is the simplistic and uncritical use of such terms as "motive." Motives (individual driving forces) are not values (cultural preferences). The former cannot be read easily from the latter, even if one understands the basic themes of a society well. While the rich versions of Abenaki myths collected in the late nineteenth century may provide us with strong hints about the cognitive orientations of late nineteenth century narrators and audiences, they do not accurately mirror the values or orientations, much less the varied motives, of individual seventeenth century Abenaki actors. What is important for historical explanation, however, is not the constructions scholars today place on Abenaki values, beliefs, or intentions, but those that, for instance, English actors did in 1674 or 1721. Had they

effectively emulated the French and sent many males, including missionaries, to live among the Abenaki, there to master their languages, to assume religious, economic, and political roles, and to found extended families, this would have only increased the level of internal conflict among these hardpressed Indian communities, it would not have generated humane external "alliances." The major underlying conflicts were in arenas other than interpersonal styles, and no enhancements of intercultural communication could have resolved them.

Morrison has performed a useful scholarly service in this experimental study, which properly stresses the importance of French, English, and English ethos in interpreting events in the Northeast between the early 1600s and 1725. It is, however, too narrowly conceived (i.e., thesis driven), and too unsophisticated sociologically, politically, and ecologically to provide a durable, comprehensive explanation of the roots, processes, and specific outcome of French, English, and Abenaki controversies in the region.

If I understand what he described, rather than what he stressed conceptually, these Indian communities were, in comparative perspective, remarkably resistant to the expansion of English settlements and authority. They did not elect a policy of accommodation and migration, as did other neighboring societies. Indeed, Morrison describes only those Abenaki who elected to remain in the Northeast; those who had by 1690 migrated west to the Ohio country, to Lake Michigan and to Louisiana are ignored. Nor—like some Eastern Algonquian and Ontario Iroquoian societies, did these particular Abenaki seek to make their mark as inter-societal brokers. Instead, long full-scale technological dependents of Euramerican communities, they opted for confrontation, for decades successfully employing a play-off system that brought benefits, as well as increasing threats, from both contentious French and English. However, their late sixteenth and early seventeenth century obsession with autonomy was likely a reflection of their long established and growing economic and technological dependency, more than anything else. As specialized producers of furs they were trapped in a changing geopolitical setting over which they struggled to obtain some control. But to sustain their key adaptations in the particularly valuable wild-life habitat on which they subsisted, they had to confront and stop the expansion of English settlements. Good human relationships

or no, effective political-economic alliances or not, clearly, the Abenaki were trying to manage the impossible. Why so? Why did they defend that particular habitat, that geopolitical location, so vigorously? And, in contrast to other Indian societies, how did they manage as well as they did so long as they did the way they did? In this volume Morrison gives us some useful clues; but a full, theoretically sophisticated accounting remains for the future.

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A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920. By Frederick E. Hoxie. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. \$25.95 Cloth.

Frederick E. Hoxie, the director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library, has written an excellent book about the drive to assimilate Indians between 1880 and 1920. The author explains why assimilation had such a broad appeal to non-Indians. He also discusses efforts by reformers to alter Indian land tenure, provide a national Indian educational system, and promote Indian citizenship. Most of the book, however, deals with why federal officials after 1890 abandoned their commitment to totally assimilate Indians and instead decided to follow strategies designed for a dependent colonial people.

This book either revises or helps clarify many of the existing historical interpretations of this era by Leonard Carlson, Henry Fritz, Robert Mardock, Delos Otis, Loring Priest, and Francis Paul Prucha. Hoxie places Indian affairs against a broad national context. He shows the value of an interdisciplinary approach to the past by using popular literature, anthropological theory, and the history of education as important historical sources.

Hoxie provides a new conceptual framework for understanding Indian-white relations between 1880 and 1920. He convincingly demonstrates that federal Indian policy during this period consisted of two distinct phases. In the 1880s, there was widespread interest in "civilizing" Indians. This interest began to wane during the 1890s when federal policymakers and