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one approaches, the more Indian folklore becomes like that of the larger society. This he attributes not to random borrowing, but to specific turning points in the history of New England Indian society, including the wars with the English during the seventeenth century (resulting in loss of confidence in traditional beliefs), acceptance of Christianity (representing the displacement of traditional religion), and such political events as allotment of land to individuals (resulting in detribalization), and the Indian Reorganization Act (leading to a resurgence of Indian identity). Whatever its context, Simmons argues that New England Indian folklore "is the major vehicle for expressing and perpetuating a persistent Indian identity" (page 267). It provides a key for understanding their history and represents the primary survival of "an Indian spirit" (page 270).

This book is a model of careful scholarship, demonstrating the potential value of the ethnohistorical study of folklore, an approach that has not been explored by students of American Indian oral traditions. Like many studies of contemporary American Indian ethnicity, for the explanation of continuity Simmons has drawn on Edward Spicer's concept of "persistent identity systems," but he has done so creatively, rather than mechanically, and in the symbolic context of folklore has offered valuable new insights. This is a volume whose methodology deserves emulation.

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Native Writings in Massachusetts. By Ives Goddard and Kathleen J. Bragdon. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1988. 791 pages, 2 vols. \$60.00 Cloth.

Ives Goddard and Kathleen J. Bragdon have made a significant contribution by publishing this book. It includes all extant manuscript writings in the Massachusetts language by native speakers, gathered through an extensive search of the nation's major repositories, including the Clements Library and the Huntington Library. Most of the materials, however, came from County of Dukes, Registry of Deeds; Massachusetts State Archives; Massachusetts Historical Society; Office of the Town Clerk, Natick,

Mass.; and Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence, R.I.

The major part of the work is Part 1 (Volume 1), in which all the texts are printed (154 documents and 8 marginalia). Each document is presented in four forms: a photograph of the document; a transcription; the colophon and notes (a brief summation of the content of the document, with the location and other background information); and, the most valuable part of the book, the translation. In translating the Massachusetts texts, Goddard and Bragdon (there is no indication of who translated which documents) followed as close to the original wording and phrasing as possible, with the intention not only to convey the meaning accurately but also to provide a close gloss for use in linguistic analysis.

What Goddard and Bragdon have done in this two-volume set is not merely translating and editing the native writings. Part 2 (Volume 2) includes various analyses of the language useful for linguists. The grammatical sketch, which covers consonants, vowels, nouns, pronouns, qualifiers, verbs, and particles, is a penetrating analysis of the Massachusetts language. The authors also discuss the Massachusetts word order (a free word order type), which, though by no means random, does not indicate grammatical roles but serves a rhetorical function by emphasizing and focusing on a topic. This volume also includes the word index, containing every word in the native documents, the English index of the translations, the appendix of the contemporary translations and some other related documents, and a selected bibliography. The lengthy introduction by the authors serves the volumes well; it furnishes thorough analysis of various aspects of the Massachusetts documents and language and of the native life seen through the documents.

Massachusetts is an extinct Eastern Algonquian language spoken by the Massachusetts, the Wampanoags, and the Nausets. It was into this language that John Eliot translated the Bible. Eliot developed an orthography based on his analysis of the Massachusetts sound system, which became the foundation for all subsequent translations into Massachusetts. Many Indians learned to read the Bible, and some became adept writers and wrote many documents in the Massachusetts language in conducting their daily affairs. The language was still widely spoken in 1750, but it was virtually extinct by the early nineteenth century. Yet

the Massachusetts texts demonstrate that literacy existed side by side with the native oral tradition for nearly 150 years. The significance of Algonquian literacy lies not only in its relatively early occurrence but in its extent and longevity as well.

Goddard and Bragdon estimate that by the beginning of the eighteenth century, about 30% of the native population could read, although fewer could write. The level of literacy skill, however, was below that of contemporary Englishmen. Many of the early writings are more like aids to memory than independent forms of communication. The *Natick Town Records*, for example, are almost telegraphic in style, with much relevant information clearly intended to be understood and hence not written down.

Most common among the manuscripts are records of land transactions between Indians. Others are records of town meetings and the decisions of special councils, depositions, wills, powers of attorney, bills, letters, and day books and ledgers. The texts also include four of the petitions Indians sent to the colonial government. They have formalized patterns of speech with repeated phrases, such as "we are pitiful, we are poor" and "us poor Indians." The native church officials kept records, including registers of births, deaths, and marriages, and were responsible for the publishing of banns. The marriage records provide the best information about family history among the Indians. Also included are marginalia and other brief writings in books and on two gravestones. Goddard and Bragdon identify three types of recorded transactions: transactions between two individuals involving the exchange of money or goods for land; transcriptions of verbal transactions; and confirmations of previous sales and verbal exchanges.

The writing and signing of documents by the Massachusetts-speaking Indians blended English legal practices and the native formal proceedings. The reader is struck by the fact that the native land transactions and depositions taken at hearings regarding disputes over lands are witnessed by many more than legally required, sometimes as many as a dozen. This seems to indicate that the natives continued the earlier practice of submitting each decision by the sachem to the scrutiny of the community as a whole at formal council meetings. The number of witnesses to the deeds of Christian Indians, particularly on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, demonstrates the continued importance of consensus in local affairs.

The authors interpret the existence of multiple copies of deeds evident in the Massachusetts texts to be part of the effort by Indians to distribute decision-making with regard to land as broadly as possible within the community, with the copies as evidence of widespread participation by community members. They also interpret it as evidence of lack of faith in the legitimacy of the legally recorded copy and as a mnemonic device for the Indians in carrying on the record of land transactions between generations in the traditional oral manner.

A close examination of these documents reveals a glimpse of Southern New England native life during the colonial period. These texts seem to correct many misconceptions aggressively asserted by some recent historians such as Francis Jennings. The documents nos. 17 and 18, for example, show that the office of the sachem descended not "from the sachem to one of the sons of a sister" but from father to son, although not necessarily to the first-born. The texts also demonstrate that the consent of the common people was required in matters of importance, such as decisions regarding land, making absurd an allegation that the white men's practice of cheating the Indians out of their land was common and widespread.

The documents vividly reveal the workings of the Indian communities. The Indians of Natick, Mashpee, and the islands continued throughout the colonial period to make decisions jointly at town meetings and elected the principal officials yearly. Although a 1694 law abolished the earlier system of autonomy for the Indians and the Indian communities came to be supervised by white guardians, in the early eighteenth century some Indians continued to serve as justices and magistrates. In the more isolated communities, native hereditary rulers also persisted.

The changing land-use practices among the Indians can also be witnessed in the Massachusetts documents. Although the land belonged to the sachemship in the seventeenth century, privatization of specific plots of individual families became a norm in the eighteenth century. By the mid-seventeenth century, as agriculture took on a more significant role, Indian sachems began to grant grazing rights or "commons" to their subjects, often in return for tribute. Gradually, partible inheritance of land became commonplace, and frequent exchanges of a few acres of land for other goods are recorded.

These documents that Goddard and Bragdon have uncovered,

catalogued, transcribed, and translated may not be useful, however, for statistical analysis because they are not exhaustive records of transactions. Despite the legal requirements for keeping public records, the Indians, unlike the white settlers, did not record all land transactions. Moreover, as the authors point out, on Martha's Vineyard deeds describing transactions between Indians and written in Massachusetts are confined to the three major areas of early English settlement on the island, suggesting that the deeds survived because of the need by subsequent non-Indian owners to document the validity of transfers. Nevertheless, this collection, one of the earliest instances of widespread vernacular literacy in native North America, provides a good cross-section of the nature of Indian society in operation.

Native Writings in Massachusetts is valuable source material that deserves careful examination by the scholars of American Indians and Indian-white relations in New England. These Indian-drafted documents, in contrast to the records kept by English clerks, who did not have the natives' comprehension of what they wrote, contribute to our deeper understanding of everyday life among the Massachusetts-speakers when they formed largely self-governing, self-sufficient Christian communities.

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The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology. Edited by William Kittredge and Annick Smith. Helena: The Montana Historical Society Press, 1988. 856 pages. \$27.95 Cloth.

"The Last Best Place" is a big title, pardner. But then this is a big book, some eleven hundred and sixty pages; and Montana is a big place. The undeniable fact of size makes the title, and the book, appropriate. It takes big thoughts, big words, big effort, just to live there. Or to have lived there. Or to travel through there. Having accomplished any of these things entitles one to be expansive, and most beneficiaries of Montana experience are that.

K. Ross Toole, professor of history at the University of Montana, has pointed out in *Montana, An Uncommon Land*, and *Twentieth Century Montana: A State of Extremes*, how many people and