

Winter 1999

## Review of Snow, Gehring, and Starna's "In Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People"

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### Recommended Citation

Published in *American Indian Quarterly* 23(1), Winter 1999), pp. 58-59 <http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/American-Indian-Quarterly,673174.aspx>

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Dean R. Snow, Charles T. Gehring, and William A. Starna, editors. In *Mohawk Country: Early Narratives about a Native People*. The *Iroquois and Their Neighbors* series, ed. Laurence M. Hauptman. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996. xxiv + 405 pp. Illustrations, tables, maps, bibliography. Paper, \$17.95.

The Iroquois have fascinated outside observers for centuries. When the first Europeans arrived in northeastern North America they heard stories about powerful (and, they also believed, fearsome) tribes living in the interior. While many of the Europeans' perceptions were skewed and incomplete, they were correct in acknowledging the significance of the those Iroquoian-speakers who had formed a unique league known as the Longhouse. Intrigued by the Iroquois' existence, challenged by their apparent diplomatic and military strength, enticed by their access to the New World's furs, and called to bring religion and civilization to them, Europeans began to invade Iroquois country. Among the many things they brought away from their intrusion into the Indians' land were their recorded observations about the Iroquois people and their way of life, their relations with other Indians, and their perceptions of Europeans. In this volume the authors have drawn together an impressive array of such documents that focus primarily upon the easternmost tribe of the Iroquois -- the Mohawks.

This volume stems from the Mohawk Valley Project, an effort to "rescue as much information as [possible] from the rapidly disappearing archaeological record in the Mohawk Valley and to synthesize that information into a chronology" (xi). In doing so those involved understood the need to also work with the available documentary sources in order to confirm and support the archaeological conclusions. *In Mohawk Country* is one result of that effort. The collaborators of this volume represent some of the most knowledgeable individuals on the region, the period, and the documentary evidence. Anthropologists Dean Snow and William Starna have been active in the field of northeastern woodland peoples for many years. Charles Gehring is director of the New Netherland Project and an expert on Dutch and other European immigrants to the region.

The editors have brought together a fine collection of observations from explorers, traders, priests, colonial officials, politicians, religious dissenters, and travelers. Spanning the period from 1634 to 1810, the contributions of these various French, Dutch, English, German, Italian, and American individuals offer wide-ranging observations into the culture and experience of the Mohawks and their fellow Iroquois. Many of the documents have been available in published form, such as in the *Jesuit Relations*, but they are brought together here for the ease of anyone interested in focusing attention upon the Mohawks. Many of these are well-known narratives, or are by fairly well-known figures, such as the observations of Harmen van den Bogaert, Isaac Jogues, Jerome Lalemant, Adriaen van der Donck, Jasper Danckaerts, Peter Schuyler, and De Witt Clinton. Some narratives are less familiar and indeed, have been previously unavailable in English. For example, excerpts from the German observers Christian Daniel Claus and Friedrich Rohde, as well as from the Italian Paolo Andreani, appear here in English for the first time. Other material is offered here in fresh and more accurate translation, such as Adriaen van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland*.

Making available a wide range of very readable sources on the Mohawks, this is a valuable volume. Still, it could be strengthened in several ways. As a documentary source it is very helpful

but could use more explanatory notes. Iroquois experts will not be dismayed by this, but those beginning research or reading the volume casually may need to know more. Those who attend to this volume with a general interest in the Mohawks may also be disappointed to find that there is not a substantial amount of general historical information. The introduction helps establish the background to the volume (it mentions the use of various terms and discusses archaeology, especially the existence and location of villages and names), but could do more to summarize the history of the Iroquois and what important aspects of their history and culture are portrayed in these narratives. Similarly, readers could benefit from a brief conclusion that summarizes the salient features of the Mohawk: experience uncovered in the sources included here. Also, while the volume includes a complete bibliography of the sources cited, no index exists to guide readers to topics of particular interest to them. Finally, readers should note that these are narratives about the Mohawks. Those who want to hear the words of the Iroquois themselves can sometimes find them here but only when they are recorded by the European observers and included in their own accounts.

Despite such drawbacks, In Mohawk Country remains a valuable source for those interested in the Mohawks as well as their fellow members of the Iroquois League. This accessible collection of documents offers readers insight into the culture and cultural change of the Mohawk people over two centuries. It also reveals the perceptions of those European observers who first encountered the Mohawk people. This volume belongs in the library of all those who continue to seek and understand the Iroquois.