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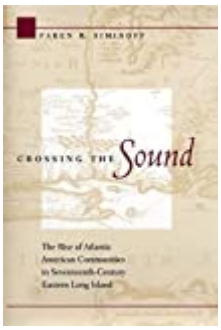

Faren R. Siminoff. *Crossing the Sound: The Rise of Atlantic American Communities in Seventeenth-Century Eastern Long Island.* New York: New York University Press, 2004. x + 211 pp. $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8147-9832-4.

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Community and the Atlantic World

Long Island in the colonial period of American history has generally existed in an historiographical vacuum. The major events of the time took place to the west, on Manhattan or the mainland, and to the north, in New England. Even though the Dutch established settlements in present-day Brooklyn and Queens in the 1630s and English villages appeared in the 1640s on the East End, the island's place in the colonial world has been seen as decidedly secondary. Even the local Native Americans, as tributaries to the Pequots and then the English, have been accounted minor players in colonial and Atlantic history. In *Crossing the Sound*, Faren R. Siminoff addresses this situation by presenting a new model for the development of seventeenth-century communities in southern New England, derived from examining the events and peoples of eastern Long Island.

Siminoff places her book firmly within both the new Indian history and Atlantic world studies. She presents a complex world on Long Island and in New England, delving into the intricacies of Native American diplomatic culture and the Indians' attempts to place the English within these traditions. She also discusses differences among various groups of European settlers and how these disputes shaped their reactions to each other and to Native Americans. No group is monolithic in this study, no group ever has complete control over any situation, and all must negotiate and compromise to gain some measure of security. In short, the book illustrates the fluid nature of early New England society; competition and co-operation among and between colonists and Indians shaped the region. We see a place and its peoples quite differently from the static, homogeneous "Puritan New England" that is too frequently presented.

The book is divided into two parts: the first discusses the many "communities of interest" in southern New England, while the second focuses on landholding, the adaptations of land tenure patterns for both English and Indians, and the connections between land ownership and community. Siminoff uses the phrase "communities of interest" to describe "multiple smaller communities within the larger traditional aggregates of peoples" (p. 2). Such communities constantly shifted and rarely corresponded exactly to nationality or ethnicity. Contacts between communities were mediated by "boundary

crossers," those people who could negotiate across interests to create stable relationships. The second part of the book uses land and land transactions to illustrate these relationships. Landholding, and the various deeds and treaties that bounded land, was in many ways the physical representation of relationships among English and Indians. Power and social status among English settlers can be determined through landholding patterns, as can the shifting balance of power between Native groups and Europeans.

Throughout her discussion, Siminoff recasts the traditional conceptions of European and Indian roles (and power) in southern New England. In particular, her explication of sachemships and the loosely hierarchical organization of power among Indian groups provides a better understanding of the structure of Native American societies. She also presents both Lion Gardiner, the English commander at Saybrook and later a resident of East Hampton, and Wyandanch, the Montaukett sachem, as boundary crossers, clarifying the common understanding of their relationship. She argues that Wyandanch understood, or quickly came to understand, the English desire for land and security as well as their methods of obtaining both. He also knew of the need among his people for security. In the aftermath of the Pequot War (1636-37), Wyandanch formed an alliance with Lion Gardiner, commander at Saybrook, that gave his people security from English retribution by repudiating their Pequot kin. Such a repudiation was fully within the bounds of traditional Native culture, and Wyandanch made sure to negotiate the terms of the alliance according to Indian standards. He insisted on a client-patron relationship rather than the complete subordination which English culture demanded. Wyandanch also enfolded Gardiner in traditional Indian forms by offering him land (with the approval of his superior sachem, Poggatacut), ceding an island between the north and south forks of Long Island which had been the site of an epidemic, making it no longer habitable by Native standards. By accepting the island, Gardiner established himself as a mediator on Indian terms.

Land transactions between Native groups and English can also be seen through the prism of negotiation, according to Siminoff. Instead of reading treaties and land deeds as symbols of English domination, she finds examples of negotiation. For example, in the "Southampton deed," made between the Shinnecock Indians and Southampton settlers in 1640, Indian negotiators included provisions that resembled client-patron relationships by requiring English settlers to provide protection from mainland Indian groups. This provision also followed traditional Native diplomacy by linking land use and military obligations. The Shinnecock also retained the right to hunting and farm land within the Southampton tract, thereby keeping some control over this land (pp. 116-17, 122).

Siminoff argues that the complexity of relationships among communities of interest was the stimulus for the rise of Atlantic American communities. Her model of community development lies in the clash of interests among the various groups of people in southern New England. The standard model of conquest, she claims, must be modified; the interactions of the many communities of interest did not allow for the total imposition of one standard over another. The disputes among Indians, Dutch and English in southern New England, particularly over land, created "hybrid systems that were the hallmarks of Atlantic America" (p. 109). Thus community, in Siminoff's interpretation, arose in North America from a complicated dance among Europeans and Indians, in which initially no one dominated and all were pursuing different goals, thereby modifying traditions on all sides.

This interpretation raises a few questions. One wonders how representative Long Island was of New England as a whole. The English settlements were smaller than those on the mainland, and Long Islanders probably lived in closer proximity to their Native neighbors than their New England countrymen, which would give them greater incentive to negotiate. The Long Island English also may have felt more directly threatened by the Dutch than their mainland countrymen did. Siminoff also defines her region of study as eastern Long Island, and classifies this as part of southern New England. Her research, however, focuses on the South Fork of Long Island: the Montaukett and Shinnecock Indians and the English settlements of Southampton and East Hampton. Although the definition of the "East End" depends to some extent upon time and place, Southold, on the North Fork, was settled the same year as Southampton. Does this early English settlement fit the same pattern of Atlantic community development as Southampton? And where do the Indians of the North Fork fit into the loose hierarchy of Long Island Native relationships? "Communities of interest" also existed on the North Fork: where do these fit in the structure that Siminoff proposes? Since much of the discussion focuses on the intersection of relationships on the East End, the North Fork needs to be included in the overall concept.

The issues presented in this book are stimulating and well-argued. Colonial historians need to revisit the concept of community, particularly in New England. The community studies of the late 1960s to early 1980s are remarkable in the depth of knowledge that they give about English settlements in New England. But as historians of the colonial Chesapeake have shown, community is not just a geographical, bounded place. Siminoff adds to this reinterpretation of community by illustrating that community is not simply national, ethnic, or religious. Early modern peoples defined themselves and their communities in many ways, and it is this multiplicity of identities that defined New England. Puritans may have dominated the region in some ways, but the monolithic, homogeneous "Puritan society" as the bedrock of American nationalism is a creation of later generations. *Crossing the Sound* is one of many recent works that challenge our conceptions about the formation of early American society; as such, it deserves a wide readership.

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