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## American Indian Culture and Research Journal

### Title

The Original Vermonters: Native Inhabitants, Past and Present. By William A. Haviland and Marjory W. Power.

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0nn9p6qz>

### Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 7(3)

### ISSN

0161-6463

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### Publication Date

1983-06-01

### DOI

10.17953

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## Reviews

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**The Original Vermonters: Native Inhabitants, Past and Present.** By William A. Haviland and Marjory W. Power. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for University of Vermont, 1981. 326 pp. \$27.50 Cloth. \$12.95 Paper.

This is an extraordinarily fine book about the entire time range of Native American presence in Vermont from the Ice Age to 1980. From their *in situ* perspective at the University of Vermont the authors were uniquely able to gather and synthesize a myriad of esoteric information collectively unknown to outsiders. And, however White Vermonters may feel about their state's current "Indian Problems," these well-qualified authors have served all Vermonters by preparing an adequate data base for more meaningful public-policy decision-making about the state's Indian affairs.

Previously, Vermont's Indian population was ignored because, until 1980, "almost every book which touches in one way or another on Vermont history" (p. 1) erroneously had claimed that there were *no* prehistoric Indians resident in Vermont and that in historical times *only* Canadian Algonkians and New York Iroquois used Vermont, solely as hunting territories or as travel routes to elsewhere. Under this erroneous smokescreen of "no resident Indians" much self-delusion has transpired at best and much depravity at worst. To counter this misconception modern anthropological scholarship is used throughout this new book to demonstrate a very active Native American presence in Vermont, past and present.

Aimed at the general reader, for whom the conceptual stage is well set in the introductory chapter, the book is arranged chronologically. Inasmuch as Vermont is a relatively small state, a potential reader might worry about rampant provinciality in a book of well over 300 pages. Indeed one does need either a Native's orientation or a much more detailed map than is provided—but of the *entire Northeast*, not just of Vermont. The authors constantly refer to geographical and cultural phenomena

in New York, New Hampshire/Maine, Massachusetts and southern Quebec/Ontario and often to places well beyond such as Ohio and Labrador. Specific Vermont affairs are put in a general Northeastern context throughout, and herein lies the real importance of this book: the local antiquarian can use it to look outward, while the regional savant can look inward to see variations on wider themes.

The second chapter considers the Vermont area's Ice Age geology, recent perspectives on the Champlain Valley's long-known Reagan site and the mechanism of "gradual movement rather than migration" by the Big Game Hunters. These Ice Age Indians reached Vermont ca. 11,000 years ago. Herds of caribou were a major meat source for them, "and possibly some of the marine mammals so abundant in the Champlain Sea" (p. 39). The standard anthropological approach of extending limited culture-specific data with general cross-cultural theory, based upon comparable cultures elsewhere, is used here (e.g., shamanism, p. 41) and throughout the book.

Environmental changes in the area at the end of the Pleistocene epoch caused major cultural and settlement changes. Haviland and Power support the suggestion "that our late Vermont Paleo-Indians had a hand in the development of the maritime Archaic, a new way of life" (p. 43), as well as producing the Vergennes Archaic at home. The latter is the main reference point in the authors' story of cultural continuity from that time to the present day.

The unfortunate and stale-sounding term "Archaic" is used by archaeologists both for a major time period in North American culture-history and for the intensive-foraging culture-types representative of that period. We are reminded, however: "Actually, . . . the Archaic way of life was extremely effective, and apparently fulfilling to those who followed it" (p. 45). The authors, in Chapter 3, admirably relate Vermont's Vergennes Archaic tradition not only to other variations in other regions but to much broader and longer-lasting matters such as "Linguistic Frontiers" and funeral ceremonialism.

"Woodland" cultures in the Northeast were basically Archaic lifeways with horticulture added. This was especially true in the Vermont area, where the authors suggest that Native horticulture arrived possibly "a lot later" (p. 136) than it did in New York. In the Mohawk Valley Native women were producing crops of

maize, beans and squash possibly as early as 900 A.D. (p. 135). "It would seem that Vermont's people were in no hurry to become farmers" (p. 137). The old Archaic interest in burial ceremonialism was developed during the Woodland period into the widespread Mound-Builder ideologies and artifacts which show less-egalitarian sharing than previously. Adena and Hopewellian Burial-Mound traditions were diffused throughout the Greater Northeast but were added onto independent cultures as were the bow and arrow and pottery.

Again, as throughout the book, Chapters 4 and 5 abound in local data well presented in larger perspectives. In these, the longest two chapters of the book, the authors skillfully synthesize the work of many scholars but particularly the notable research of archaeologist-ethnohistorian Peter A. Thomas and ethnologist-ethnohistorian Gordon M. Day. Here the "original" Vermonters step full-dressed from these pages of sociocultural details. Haviland and Power work the collective findings around the continuity theme that "the roots of Western Abenaki culture lie in the late Archaic Vergennes culture" (p. 198). "In other words, although the Archaic period ended in Vermont in the last millennium B.C., the Archaic as a cultural tradition did not end in Vermont until Native culture had been seriously disrupted by the impact of European intrusion and domination" (p. 13). And Archaic influence continues still in the differences of values between today's Native American Vermonters and the majority's Space-Age American culture.

The Abenaki were simply run over roughshod by the irresistible forces loosed by the Whites. The various Western Abenaki bands and villages introduced in Chapter 5 are described in Chapter 6 as the victims of "Epidemics and Plague," "The Fur Trade," "The British Menace," "The Abenaki-Iroquoian Wars," "The Abenaki-British Wars," "British Encroachment" and "The Allens and Usurpation by the New United States." Just for the record, a missing category of victimization should be "French Exploitation" because, however willing, their support of the French political cause cost the Abenaki dearly in the long run, and it is only fair to make this point clear when assessing European impacts.

Throughout their centuries of conflict with outsiders, foreign or domestic, the Abenaki had developed the adaptive practice of "strategic withdrawal" from their population centers to their

peripheral areas. After 1675 the latter included the French mission-station of Odanak on the St. Francis River almost at the St. Lawrence. Odanak became in time the Abenaki center of centers. Repeatedly, withdrawal had saved Abenaki populations but eventually it lost them most of their lands because Vermont Abenaki were considered to be Quebec Abenaki by New Englanders—until recently, that is.

Chapter 7 summarizes the recent story of the supposedly extinct people and culture, who actually were present all along, although well hidden from White consciousness. "What happened simply was that, between 1970 and 1975, there was a resurgence of pride in their ethnic identity on the part of Vermont's Abenakis" (p. 248). "Tribal spokesmen estimate that, as of 1980, there are between 1500 and 2000 Abenakis living in Vermont" (p. 251).

The ups and downs of the Vermont Abenaki attempts to gain official recognition as a People and culture to be respected are described in both Chapter 7 and Appendices A-D. Besides the inevitable land-claims and public-assistance questions dependent upon legal-status definitions, there looms the larger concerns of cultural pluralism. For instance, Vermont's White legislators have enacted fish and game laws inherently discordant with the values derived from the Archaic tradition that still influences the Abenaki. With no foreseeable outcome at hand, Haviland and Power nonetheless end their consideration of the Vermont Abenaki campaign on a hopeful note.

Like many indigenous peoples in almost all parts of the globe, they have decided that they have a right to their own identity and should be allowed to work out their own way of being different. When a whole people give up and disappear as a people, just because their continued presence is inconvenient or upsetting to some, all of humanity is in trouble. The Abenakis have not given up and disappeared, and we can all take encouragement from that fact. (p. 263)

The book's eighteen pages of "Bibliographic Notes" and twenty page "Bibliography" clearly demonstrate how well-researched the book is and how useful the work should be to others. Nowhere else is so much information on this subject so meaningfully synthesized for future use. The book itself is in the

usual attractive and quality-controlled format that one may expect from this publisher. Haviland and Power not only have filled a large gap with needed knowledge but have produced a model book as well. Both those interested in studying Northeastern Indians (past and present) and the Vermont Abenaki themselves should be delighted with this publication. It sets a standard well worth emulating, in both scholarship and inter-ethnic understanding.

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**John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction.** Edited by Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda. Contributions in American History, No. 88 Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980. 173 pp. \$27.50 Cloth.

In 1671 John Eliot, missionary to the Indians, wrote his *Indian Dialogues* in the hope of converting more Indians to Puritanism. It was printed poorly and in a very limited press run. Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda, who discovered that there are only two copies extant (one in Oxford's Bodleian Library and the other in the Lenox Collection at the New York Public Library), have now reprinted and annotated the *Dialogues* for a wider audience. They not only have adopted modern usage as to capitalization, punctuation and spelling but have corrected the misspellings and typographical errors which are numerous in the original.

The *Dialogues*, a series of imagined encounters between Praying Indians and other Natives, is divided into three parts. In Dialogue I Eliot portrays the Indian missionary as having denounced the traditional Native way of life as "filth and folly," accepted Christian truth as contrast with pagan falsehood and come to a village to root out a depraved way of life and to replace it with correct beliefs that nourish true piety. The Native listeners, however, are largely unconcerned, saying that "We are well as we are, and desire not to be troubled with these new wise sayings." When the missionary begins demonstrating his piety through practical examples, the Natives begin to listen more respectfully as they understand how the new religion applies to their present lives in a practical, day-to-day fashion.