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The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas. By Olive Payticia Dickason

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sacred leadership into government-sponsored secular leadership. The volume points to many research needs in the field. Tribal examinations, Indian Civil Rights Act impact beyond the Martinez case, age-old corruption questions, and even such intriguing comparative studies as the leadership responses of Fred Lookout and Chee Dodge to 1920s oil would prove beneficial, to name only a few avenues.

Leadership is especially crucial for Indians in the years to come as pressures increase for natural resource development. Decisions made now regarding water or other resources will affect Indian peoples' rights for generations to come. Examples such as this work on Indian leaders' decision-making in the past can provide guidance for the future.

C. B. Clark

The Newberry Library

The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas. By Olive Payticia Dickason. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984. 372 pp. \$30.00 Cloth.

This well-documented and handsomely illustrated volume surveys French attitudes and beliefs regarding American Indians from the fifteenth through the early seventeenth centuries. It provides an excellent account of the impact of increased contacts upon French concepts about Indians and indicates that although some preconceived ideas were destroyed, others were strengthened. The volume also examines Indian attitudes toward the French.

Dickason points out that the French and other Europeans possessed a broad repertoire of preconceived ideas regarding "savages" that significantly influenced their initial contact with Indian people. European folk-beliefs contained a rich tradition of legends regarding "beast-men" or "hairy men" who supposedly inhabited regions other than western Europe, and although the French soon realized that the Indian inhabitants of the New World were devoid of such non-human characteristics, the French continued to emphasize those facets of Indian culture which seemed to indicate that the tribespeople lacked the political, economic or social institutions common to "civilized" men. Indeed, like other Europeans, the French continued to focus

upon what they believed to be lacking in Native American culture, rather than focusing upon those Indian institutions which were successful and which obviously met the Indians' needs. Dickason indicates that although the French attempted to secure alliances with the tribesmen, they still regarded them as "savages," a delineation which dominated French attitudes; and "as the negative and positive views of Amerindians polarized and crystallized, the one upholding their superior virtue became chiefly a literary and theoretical position, while the one downgrading them became the guide for practical politics" (p. 52).

Part of Dickason's analysis includes an examination of the Frenchmen who initiated these contacts. Similar to early colonists from other European countries, the first French colonists were primarily interested in wealth rather than permanent settlement. Spanish success in acquiring gold and silver from Meso-America encouraged ambitious Frenchmen to seek similar plunder, and when such treasure proved to be elusive, the French turned their interests toward the seemingly inexhaustible supply of fur available from the Indians of Canada. Yet early contacts between the French and Indians in the St. Lawrence Valley produced considerable misunderstanding among both sides, and Dickason argues that the French at first rode roughshod over the tribesmen, exploiting them and ignoring codes of Indian etiquette. Many of the first tribespeople to visit France were Indians who were kidnapped while visiting French vessels and who were carried across the Atlantic as captives. Dickason indicates that the "widely acclaimed French skill in finding accommodation with Amerindians" which flowered in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "was an ability that had been developed through sometimes painful experience" (p. 172).

Dickason's discussion of the Indians who visited France is particularly interesting. Although the tribespeople were exposed to a broad spectrum of French society, many were entertained at the French court in the hope of cementing stronger political alliances. Yet those Indians who returned to the Americas seemed to remain loyal to their own people's interests, and by the late seventeenth century mounting expenses and mixed results caused the French court to discourage these "official" visits.

Unfortunately, because Indians possessed no natural immunities to Old World diseases, many of the visiting tribespeople contracted the maladies and died. Others returned to their

homes, but Dickason argues that they were shocked by the inequitable distribution of wealth in French society, and that the Indians did not believe that living conditions in France were superior to their own. Not surprisingly, Dickason's discussion of Indian attitudes is more limited than her analysis of similar concepts among the French. Obviously handicapped by a paucity of sources, Dickason is often forced to speculate about Indian impressions of the Europeans, yet her assumptions are based upon careful research and reflect a sensitivity to Indian culture. Still, *The Myth of the Savage* provides considerably more information about French attitudes than about those held by the tribespeople.

Jesuit missionaries slowly strengthened the ties between the two peoples, but they also encountered initial difficulties. The collapse of the Indian regimes in Meso-America seemed to indicate a divine intervention in support of European expansion, and French officials believed that missionaries would meet with few obstacles in the wholesale conversion of the Indians in North America. But the Jesuits had difficulty in mastering the Indian languages, and the Indians resented the priests' demands that converts withdraw from the many ceremonies that strengthened the bonds of traditional Indian communities. Eventually the Jesuits mastered the rich metaphors which characterized Indian languages, and they enrolled Indian children in their schools, but the priests finally admitted that the Indians "possessed a viable culture which, while it did not always correspond to the French way, still had its own logic that worked very well" (p. 267). Accordingly, the Jesuits adapted their efforts to better meet the needs of the Indians, but such syncretism encountered resistance from prelates in France who remained unsympathetic to the problems faced by both the missionaries and the tribespeople.

In summary, this volume provides an excellent overview of the early contacts between the French and the Indians. Dickason's discussion of the impact of such contacts upon both the French and the Indians provides valuable insights into the character of both cultures, and her analysis of the many factors which preconditioned the French to assess the Indians as "savages" is particularly perceptive. Moreover, both the author and the publisher should be lauded for the quality and number of fine illustrations which complement this volume. Almost all are contemporary engravings or woodcuts which also illuminate French ideas regard-

ing Indian adornment, economic activity, or other facets of Indian culture. In addition, Dickason's endnotes provide valuable commentary upon subjects mentioned in her text. Although the volume is more comprehensive than innovative, *The Myth of the Savage* is an important contribution to the study of early contacts between the inhabitants of the New and Old Worlds.

R. David Edmunds

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"Some Kind of Power": Navajo Children's Skinwalker Narratives. By Margaret K. Brady. Foreword by Barre Toelken. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984. 224 pp. \$14.95 Cloth.

In traditional Navajo belief, a skinwalker is a human witch who wears a coyote skin. Dr. Margaret K. Brady collected over one hundred skinwalker stories from forty-three Navajo fifth and sixth graders in 1976, and in *"Some Kind of Power"* she analyzes the children's storytelling behavior, the development of their narrative competence, the function of the skinwalker figure in traditional Navajo culture, and the nature of the children's skinwalker narratives themselves. This makes for a fascinating and informative book that will interest not only Navajo experts but also folklorists, anthropologists, literary scholars, and indeed anyone at all who is interested in children or storytelling.

The stories were collected in a Catholic school in the Fort Defiance-Window Rock area of northeastern Arizona, and most of the children in the study were from highly acculturated, relatively urbanized and affluent families. Therefore, the persistence of these skinwalker stories in their lore demonstrates the tenacity of traditional symbols in the imaginations of the younger generation.

Of course, caution must be exercised in accepting the conclusions of research such as Brady's. The researcher may have, consciously or unconsciously, influenced the subjects' behavior, and subjects who know that they are subjects inevitably alter their own behavior. Brady, however, took care to minimize these problems: she did not interfere with the children in any way other than to introduce a tape recorder—which they soon came to ignore—into their classroom. The children initiated storytelling