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Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom. By Marvin T. Smith.

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Iroquois leaders. Many of the “sales,” including the blatantly fraudulent Buffalo Creek Treaty of 1838 (afflicting the Senecas) were carried out in violation of the federal non-intercourse acts, which forbade alienation of land by state-level interests lacking federal approval. Disregard of these provisions has proved instrumental in several modern land-claims suits in Iroquoia and elsewhere, notably in Maine.

To my knowledge, *Conspiracy of Interests* is the first work that correlates the loss of Iroquois land base during the early nineteenth century to the growth of state tolls from the Erie Canal (330 percent between 1836 and 1856). The merit of this book is not so much the novelty of its parts, but the deftness with which Hauptman intertwines the various elements.

The land-speculation industry had permeated the state government at Albany by the early nineteenth century, turning the dispossession of the Iroquois into a civil and commercial imperative. Along the way, Several self-described “friends of the Indian,” according to Hauptman, “used their strategic positions to undermine the Indian land base from the mid-1780s on” (p. 58). Most notable among these persons was Peter Schuyler, who to Hauptman was “the major player in the events leading to the dispossession of these Indians” (p. 58). Schuyler, like few others, embodied the common interests of land speculation with other political and commercial interests sweeping over Iroquoia at this time.

As a United States senator during the postrevolutionary period, Schuyler was one of New York’s most powerful individuals. Political power translated directly into some of the largest private land holdings in central New York. Here and elsewhere, policymakers doubled as land speculators. Sometimes speculators did their best to make public policy, as when the Ogden Land Company became one of the leading advocates of Iroquois removal west of the Missouri River—all the better to conduct company business in what had been until recently Iroquois homelands.

Although his historical narrative ends, for the most part, before present time, Hauptman’s book helps to inform debate over present-day news in upstate New York, where each Iroquois nation has an ongoing legal struggle to address parts of the dispossession that Hauptman describes. The Onondagas, for example, have a claim to portions of the Syracuse urban area—one indication of the historical and legal stakes that Hauptman describes in *Conspiracy of Interests*.

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**Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom.** By Marvin T. Smith. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000. 147 pages. \$49.95 cloth.

In this brief book, Marvin T. Smith accomplishes several remarkable feats. He brings to life a prehistoric Native American polity and links the historic past

with the prehistoric (a gap that is surprisingly difficult to bridge in eastern North America). In addition, he provides a case study of the effect European contact had on a Native American culture. The portrait he paints is not one of immediate collapse, but of a slow, painful decline fed by conflict and disease. Not surprising to those of us who study Native American cultures, the portrait Smith paints of the Coosa chiefdom is also one of resilience. After 250 years of epidemic disease and endemic battles, the Coosa chiefdom remained, transformed but not destroyed, to be removed to Oklahoma with the rest of the Creek Confederacy.

The Coosa chiefdom itself was a remarkable entity. It emerged around B.C.E. 1350 out of relative obscurity in the power vacuum left by the fall of the Etowah polity. By 1540 Coosa had not only developed into a powerful chiefdom but also had emerged as the paramount chiefdom in the southern Appalachian ridge and valley province. Dozens of other chiefdoms were, according to Spanish accounts, "subject" to Coosa, perhaps some 50,000 people in all. The lands controlled by Coosa were described as among the richest and most densely populated that the Spanish had encountered, and the chief of Coosa himself was described as the powerful ruler of a vast territory. By 1560 Coosa was in decline. Population had fallen dramatically and the chiefdom itself was no longer a unified political entity. What happened between 1540 and 1560? The search for an answer to that question is at the heart of this book.

*Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom* is based on some of the finest archaeological work yet conducted in the southeastern United States. David Hally's excavations at the King and Little Egypt sites, for example, represent some of the most extensive and technically sophisticated excavations carried out in the Southeast. The collaborative work undertaken by Smith, Charles Hudson, and Chester DePratter to determine the route taken by the de Soto expedition led not only to a revised and much more plausible route than that proposed in 1939 by the De Soto Expedition Commission, but also to the identification and examination of new historical documents and numerous historic-period archaeological sites. What is most exciting about the work Smith and his colleagues have done is their ability to blend archaeology and ethnohistory, creating direct physical links between historic documents and archaeological cultures. This has long been a goal of archaeology in the United States and Smith and his colleagues have provided a model for how it can be achieved.

The book is divided into seven chapters, the first giving background on the prehistory of the Coosa area before the Mississippian Period, and the last being a short, four-page abstract of the work. The middle five chapters give an overview of Mississippian-Period archaeology in the Coosa region (chapter two); historic accounts of the region produced by members of the Hernando de Soto, Tristán de Luna, and Juan Pardo expeditions (chapter three); mid-twentieth-century archaeology on the Coosa chiefdom (chapter four); more recent research by Smith and his colleagues on the archaeological record of the Coosa chiefdom (chapter five); and Smith's interpretation of cultural change among the Coosa between 1568 and 1700 (chapter six). Smith weaves a fascinating tale, offering detail with a brevity that makes the work highly readable and accessible.

The book's one weakness is the extent to which Smith presents contested ideas as facts. For example, Smith takes for granted that he and his colleagues have correctly identified the route of the de Soto entrada, while in fact there has been some controversy about segments of their reconstruction. Perhaps most important to this work, the identification of the Little Egypt site as the location where de Soto met the chief of Coosa has been contested, yet here Smith takes it as a given. In some ways these are nitpicky points, for such controversies cannot be adequately handled in a short work intended for both lay and academic audiences. On the other hand, Smith overstates the real knowledge we have of the Coosa chiefdom and in doing so seems to cross the boundary between what is posited and what is known without clearly marking that divide.

The University Press of Florida should be congratulated for publishing this work, and for the solid binding, handsome typeface, and clear illustrations with which it has been produced. The one complaint I have is the book's price, which will make many potential buyers balk and may make the book too expensive to use as a supplemental text in North American archaeology courses, for which it would otherwise be ideal. *Coosa: The Rise and Fall of a Southeastern Mississippian Chiefdom* is the product of high quality research and writing, and it will be enjoyed by generations of students and scholars alike. It should be considered essential reading for anyone interested in the later prehistory of North America, the Native Americans of the southeastern United States, or the effect of contact on Native American cultures.

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**Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism and Native America, 1585–1685.**  
By Michael Leroy Oberg. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. 239 pages.  
\$42.50 cloth.

This book sets out to explain the “tragic” failure of seventeenth-century Englishmen to live up to their best imperial vision. According to Oberg, early English colonial ventures contained a significant “metropolitan” element, which sought to incorporate Native peoples into empire by cultivating diplomatic alliances, fostering trade relationships, and spreading the Gospel. But this metropolitan vision proved too fragile for early America. It was resented, thwarted, and eventually defeated by settler populations more eager to engross Indian lands than to Christianize, trade, or ally with their neighbors; and it was resisted by Algonquians unwilling to be “civilized” on the English model. In each British mainland colony Oberg studies, a deadly pattern emerged in which metropolitan leaders lost political control as greedy frontier interests, more adept at dealing with the “exigencies” of survival, asserted themselves and finally prevailed. On all frontiers, indigenous peoples experienced increasingly harsh treatment, violence, and ultimately removal, once the metropolitans were eclipsed by their bumptious frontier rivals.