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Robert A. Jr.. Williams. *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 192 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-506591-6.

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In 1990, Robert A. Williams, Jr., wrote *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest.* This comprehensive and fascinating book explored how Europeans applied their legal beliefs and practices to native peoples. Williams's new book, *Linking Arms Together: American Indian Treaty Visions of Law and Peace, 1600-1800*, examines the same issue from the side of Native Americans. *Linking Arms Together* begins to answer an important question, how American Indians influenced and interpreted early Indian-white negotiations. Williams demonstrates the leading role that American Indians played in establishing diplomatic traditions. He explores some common Indian beliefs about the rituals and meanings of treaties. Unfortunately, this book is a rather quick, general overview, which does not match Williams's more in-depth study of the European side of the question.

In *Linking Arms Together*, Williams persuasively argues that American Indians' views on treaty negotiations and responsibilities profoundly affected Indian-white relations. He points out that when Europeans first arrived in North America they did not have the power to impose their visions and purposes on the peoples they encountered there. Moreover, European rules of diplomacy based on "hierarchy and centralization of authority" did not fit the complex, decentralized nature of negotiating with the multitude of eastern tribes (p. 32). In contrast, North American Indians were accustomed to delicate diplomacy on a complex "multicultural frontier," in Williams's apt words. Existing methods of diplomacy were able to accommodate the newcomers. Having common conventions for diplomacy forwarded both Indian and European goals.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian-white negotiations employed Indian metaphors and rituals. Indians often expressed the sacredness of treaties with rituals such as smoking the sacred pipe, or calumet. Another common custom was the use of wampum belts, elaborate strings of beads, as symbolic messages. These rituals and symbols made treaty participants into metaphoric kin, a status that made breaking treaties similar to betraying family. For example, Chippewa chief Mash-i-pi-nash-i-wish told the United States at the Treaty of Greenville in 1795: "When I show you this belt, I point out to you your children at one end of it, and mine at the other… Remember, we have taken the Great Spirit to witness our present actions; we will make a new world, and leave nothing on it to incommode our children (p. 99)." Like many chiefs before him, Mash-i-pi-nash-i-wish informed his treaty partners of the ability of a sacred treaty to ensure their future together. The treaty tied the Chippewa and the United States to each other, just as the wampum belt connected the beads at its two ends. As Williams demonstrates, such treaties created "a complex web of connective, reciprocating relationships" that safeguarded peace and security in a dangerous world (p. 62).

Historians have long portrayed Indians as obstacles to Euro-American conquest of North America. Some of these historians have viewed Indians as a troublesome obstacle to be conquered by whites' progress across the continent; others have seen Indians as continually mounting a righteous defense against invaders. Williams adopts an alternative argument increasingly common in the New Indian History. He calls Indians of the eastern woodlands "active facilitators of the many multicultural accommodations that Europeans found absolutely essential for survival on a colonial frontier" (p. 20). He reminds readers that North American Indians were neither homogeneous nor unified. Many tribes found alliance with a European power, or playing two powers off of each other, to be a tremendous advantage over regional rivals. In addition, avoiding conflict was an important objective for most parties on this dangerous and crowded borderland. Negotiation and compromise were wiser strategies than

armed conflict. In general, most Indians at most times in the seventeenth century treated Europeans not as threatening invaders but as a new people to fit into an old system of treaties and alliances. While many historians have portrayed Indians as "stubborn, 'savage' barriers to expansion," Williams demonstrates that they were "active, sophisticated facilitators on a multicultural frontier" (p. 29).

Williams shows that both Indians and Europeans desired and benefited from good relations. For example, he does not portray the fur trade as the traditional story of escalating Indian dependence on European goods. Rather, it was a "unique period of increasing interdependence between the different cultural and racial groups engaged in the commerce and politics of accommodation and conflict that surrounded the trade" (pp. 21-22). Blankets, knives with metal blades, and copper pots benefited eastern tribes. Those leaders who controlled the distribution of goods within a tribe increased their own power. Tribes increasingly required guns and ammunition as their neighbors acquired arms. But Europeans also depended on their American Indian allies. The lucrative fur trade would have failed without partners. In addition, the French and English newcomers needed military alliances in a region ripe for conflict. They were outnumbered by Indians and were not inclined to ally with each other.

Williams generalizes about eastern woodland tribal beliefs and practices while avoiding oversimplifications. He pays particular attention to the Iroquois covenant chain but also shows how ceremonies such as smoking the sacred pipe and beliefs such as the importance of fictive kinships spanned the eastern woodlands. Much of his ability to generalize comes from his impressive array of secondary sources. He wisely draws on important recent works such as Daniel Richter's on the Iroquois and Richard White's on the middle ground of the Great Lakes region. Williams brings their important insights on tribal or regional Indian diplomacy into his more general analysis. However, his use of some other secondary works is more problematic. For example, his comparison of Native American storytelling to philosopher Richard Rorty's call for using the imagination to empathize with others seems odd and unedifying. Similar ahistorical references periodically disturb the flow of the book.

While Williams's secondary sources are comprehensive and generally useful, this book would benefit greatly from more primary evidence. As a book about stories, treaties, and ceremonies, it needs more of them. The book cites enough evidence to be persuasive but leaves the reader unsatisfied. More and, especially, longer stories would flesh out Williams's analysis and provide more of a sense of the intricate, important, and at times astonishing early Indian-white interactions. A shortage of available primary sources is often an impediment to writing Native American history before the twentieth century. But the primary sources on early Indian-white relations that are available are often rich accounts of very different peoples attempting to understand each other. By relying on secondary sources and snippets of primary ones, Williams forfeits this asset. Also, his shortage of stories makes Williams's points repetitive. Rather than hammering home well-illustrated arguments, his repeated phrases such as "American Indian visions of law and peace" are often simply redundant.

Overall, *Linking Arms Together* is a worthwhile but fairly cursory synthesis of the meanings that American Indians attached to the complex negotiations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Readers unfamiliar with the work of such historians as Richter and White will find this book a good introduction to early Indian-white diplomacy. I hope it will spur further research into this important subject.

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