

Empire by Collaboration: Indians, Colonists, and Governments in Colonial Illinois Country. By Robert Michael Morrissey. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 352 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$45.00 electronic.

The title of Robert Michael Morrissey's engaging book captures its central idea. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Illinois Indians displayed an ability to negotiate and to modify their behavior when it seemed profitable, to the extent that the Catholic missionaries, French inhabitants, and representatives of the French imperial government would also be flexible and cooperative. This is "empire by collaboration," with all parties adjusting their behavior for the benefit of the whole society. The author makes it clear that this was collaboration through understanding, as opposed to creative misunderstanding.

The Illinois Indians were recent arrivals in the Mississippi Valley. Algonquian in language, earlier they had been driven west by the expansion and wars of the Iroquois, French, and British. They settled on the great prairie west of the Mississippi, where, without horses, they became expert at slaughtering bison and built their economy around bison meat and skins. They were also warriors, and fought not only to defend their own hunting grounds, but also to raid other tribes, capture female slaves, and at times, increase their numbers of warriors. Additional women were needed to process bison parts, raise crops, and make garments. In the seventeenth century they moved into the Illinois country, an area where many Indians had settled in previous centuries, but at that time few were remaining. The new Illinois Indians had already proved their ability to adapt according to their situation, and they certainly understood the importance of cooperation. Bonding their communities together was an understanding that in order to hunt bison and wage war, planning and disciplined cooperation was required. Further cohesion was created by family relationships; if they desired to collaborate with especially desirable persons who were not family connections, they used rituals to adopt them.

Their earliest contacts with the French were brief and inconclusive, but the second group of Jesuit priests in the Illinois country, led by Father Jacques Gravier, succeeded in making many converts, especially among women. Gravier learned to appreciate Indian culture, mastered Algonquian languages, and made a large dictionary, even designing special letters for sounds foreign to the French. The French Jesuits were Catholic, but not necessarily cobuilders of the French empire; they were at first distressed by the corrupting influence of French fur traders, whose numbers were always increasing.

The original Kaskaskia, near the big bend in the Illinois River and close to the site of today's Peoria, grew rapidly in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and survived a major raid by the Iroquois in 1680. In 1694 came a decisive change. A successful fur trader who had stolen provisions from Father Louis Hennepin, Michel Accault, was now settled in Kaskaskia and much attracted to Chief Rouensa's daughter Marie. At first Marie refused his proposal; a devout protégée of Father Gravier, she wished to avoid marriage altogether. But the Chief approved of her marriage to the wealthy trader and, with the encouragement of Father Gravier, Marie accepted the proposal on the condition that Accault become a Christian also. He did, and for the rest of his life was an active supporter of the faith. Subsequently the couple had many children, who were all

baptized, and with their union several generations of marriages between Illinois Indians and French settlers began, with the blessing of the Church. To be sure, almost all of the French-speaking mixed families had a French father and an Indian mother, but in such a small community—there were never more than 1,500 residents in the French and Indian villages—everyone was related, especially since each baptized infant had godparents. That the most prosperous members of the community had the most godchildren, whether French, Indian, or mixed, is evidence that in French and Indian Illinois these relationships became entirely proper. In contrast, when the French government became established in Louisiana intermarriage was greatly discouraged, but like many other rules that were sent from both New Orleans and Quebec, the Illinois settlers paid no attention, including the Jesuit priests who defended the practice of intermarriage.

Perhaps because of soil exhaustion and scarcity of timber, shortly after 1700 the French and Indians relocated, mainly to a strategic location at the confluence of the Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers, the site today of Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Fort de Chartres, and St. Genevieve. This region is also closer to Louisiana, and during the course of the eighteenth century this territory became the main market for furs and skins from Illinois, as well as its normally abundant crops. To the annoyance of French officials, it also improved opportunities for trading Indian slaves, with customers coming from as far away as South Carolina. This New Orleans trade brought African slaves to Illinois, and eventually, black slaves outnumbered Indian slaves on Illinois farms.

Priests, Creole farmers, and fur traders did indeed learn to get along with the Illinois Indians, despite their sometimes-differing interests, especially regarding diplomacy with other Indian tribes, but such differences were always negotiated peacefully. Collaboration was much more difficult with officials from Quebec, New Orleans, New York, Virginia, and Philadelphia. Almost every official sent to rule over Illinois soon discovered that the Indians and Creoles would obey only if they found his orders reasonable. Always outnumbered, even when they had a few soldiers with them, most officials—unfortunately not all—came around sooner or later to accept the local points of view. Toward the end of the century, the French colonial Illinois land east of the Mississippi first passed to the British and then, a few years later, to the United States. The Creoles and Indians of French colonial Illinois were unsuccessful in seeking collaboration with the British and United States regimes and their empire by collaboration broke down. Most then crossed the Mississippi where a fragile Spanish and Catholic regime welcomed them.

Morrissey tells this story very well, and supports it with sixty-five pages of notes, twenty-three illustrations, five tables, and a map. For those readers wanting more information about the social and economic life of colonial French Illinois, further reading includes two outstanding books by Carl J. Ekberg, *Colonial St. Genevieve* and *French Roots in the Illinois Country*. Alan Taylor, Richard White, Kathleen DuVal, and Pekka Hämmäläinen have written similarly penetrating histories of the periphery around the European invasion of North America.

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