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Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012. x + 424 pp. Maps, illustrations, tables, appendix, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-8078-3558-6.

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Readers familiar with Professor Brett Rushforth's groundbreaking articles will be further rewarded by the appearance of his full study on Native slaveries in New France. In *Bonds of Alliance*, Rushforth traces the transformation of a significant Native slave trade in the American interior and argues that this practice fundamentally shaped French colonial efforts in North America. This work locates the genesis and utility of "Indian slavery" and corrects erroneous perceptions of Indians as "good masters" while adding nuance, complexity, and a narrative of change over time to indigenous practices of slavery in the colonial period. Fundamentally, Rushforth also shifts French importance in creating a "middle ground" in Atlantic America away from emphasis on French diplomatic genius to the rise of Atlantic slavery, the savvy use made of Native slavery as a tool of alliance by indigenous communities, and the subsequent change in French imperial goals to recreate a dynamic and contested colonial heartland and border. In the contours of the Indian slave trade," Rushforth writes, "we can read an indigenous counternarrative to the French story of ethnic shattering in the Pays d'en Haut" (p. 12).

Bonds of Alliance is positioned as a link between three vibrant literatures—those of colonial New France, of Native slavery, and of the legal and moral justifications for the Atlantic plantation complex. In the past decade, historians working on New France have deepened and broadened our understanding of Canada's relationship to a French Atlantic world and have shed light on the contested borderlands at the edge of the French empire. Richly comparative works on southeastern indigenous American slavery from Tiya Miles, William Ramsey, Circe Sturm, Claudio Saunt, Christina Snyder, and others have exploded the space of slavery as a Columbian Exchange phenomenon forced by those of white European descent on individuals of African heritage.[1] *Bonds of Alliance* brings to life a previously overlooked area of these colonial experiences, the Native slavery prevalent in the Great Lakes region, and ties it to larger Atlantic phenomena (ranging from theoretical discussion of slavery to practical articulation of slave trade networks). It then follows the transformation of this indigenous institution by identifying French and Native interactions at mid-continent and in the Saint Lawrence Valley. Rushforth's concern is not so much to expose readers to the idea that Native slavery existed as much as it is to demystify and de-romanticize indigenous bonded labor, taking on the common misperception of non-white slaveholders being more lenient masters, and to show how central these literal "bonds of alliance" were in shaping French colonialism in Canada.

In locating the heart of his narrative beyond the Saint Lawrence, Rushforth expands the field beyond the initial work done by Marcel Trudel in outlining slavery in colonial New France and makes Native actors the central engineers of a system that shaped the nature the French north Atlantic empire.[2] For instance, he tells the story of the enslaved Marie-Marguerite, taken by Iowas, scarred to show Iowa dominance, gifted to Winnebagos in a show of Iowa loyalty, and then ultimately given to the French, which encapsulates a unique logic of indigenous slavery: "Originally a symbol of enmity, Marguerite was now an emblem of friendship. In these two roles, she fulfilled the two central purposes of

indigenous slavery” (p. 351). Moreover, Rushforth explains how the connection between indigenous and Atlantic slaveries came to be lost: “French colonial realignment so thoroughly severed connections between Canada and the French Caribbean that historical memory of their earlier ties all but disappeared” (p. 369). *Bonds of Alliance* showcases why the restoration of these dense links is critical to better understanding the early modern French Atlantic empire.

Tracing change over time requires outlining the origins and forms of bonded labor and slavery in the *pays d'en haut* as well as in an expanding French Atlantic world. Indian slavery was an institution central to “regional war culture and to the diplomacy that kept warfare from overtaking the region” in the Great Lakes (p. 35). While the transformation of humans into “my dog, my slave” (p. 15) was well established in Native North America, Rushforth explains in chapter two that by contrast, the French settlers brought with them “a historically and culturally specific but still evolving form of slavery” (p.78). The roots of French Antillean slavery relied on metropolitan French legal concepts of bondage (using the principles of just war to explain African captivity, rather than solely resting on non-Christian, heathen, or racial ideals). Over time, the imprecise French definitions for slavery fluctuated, generating a space in which Native concepts and practices of slavery could influence the contours of bondage in the French Atlantic colonies. Inserting Native voices into French theories of enslavement is only one of Rushforth’s aims. Chapter two also asserts that despite attempts to have laws governing slavery “uniformly support the enslavement of Indians, Africans, and mulattoes, French Atlantic slavery had come to depend, by the early eighteenth century, on nearly the opposite. Legal pluralism, rather than legal uniformity, defined slavery in the French Atlantic world” (p.133). If scholars like Sue Peabody have helped to outline the free soil principle that came to govern France, despite the presence of Atlantic chattel slavery elsewhere in royal territory, Rushforth uses pluralism to help explain the rise of hybrid Native-French slaveries, as well as the unique characteristics of this system and of the individuals suitable for enslavement in it.[3]

The integration of Native and French slaveries did not occur until the first decade of the eighteenth century, after French imperial motives extended past the colonial Laurentian centers of Quebec and Montreal, and into the heart of Indian territory in the upper Midwest. Rushforth relies on the early writings of New France Intendant Jacques Raudot, who distanced French colonists from the act of slavery (they purchased slaves from Indians rather than taking them directly) and moved to protect the rights of these French property owners. Raudot undergirded the system on paper while diplomatic imperatives both drove the French to enter further into Native slave trading systems and simultaneously constrained France’s ability to re-export Indian slaves out of North America. Accomplishing Louis XIV’s ambitious territorial expansion westward into North America required French officials to forge relationships with the peoples inhabiting these spaces. The alliances they formed came to be literally sealed by compacts of human flesh and blood, the “little flesh” offered by Indians (p. 157) and ritually accepted by French officials. Even as Indian captives facilitated Native-French partnerships, however, new complications arose. Enslaved Indians remained in North America, and Native slavery existed in indigenous communities side-by-side with French slavery, thus giving many Native nations a far greater say in this particular colonial practice than the indigenous merchants on Africa’s Atlantic littoral.

The rapid expansion of Native American slave trades to fulfill diplomatic concerns and the ambitions of colonists hungry to elevate their status to those of masters is seen in Rushforth’s analysis of the term *panis*, the word used to denote enslaved Indians. Critical of readings that have equated *panis* to the Pawnee nation, Rushforth instead demonstrates how *panis* created a legal fiction that obscured the diverse backgrounds of those caught in an increasing tide of indigenous slaves being sent east—Apaches, Fox, Iowas, and others and, in fact, few “true” Pawnees. The more slaves became the glue by which reciprocal obligations were measured between French and Indians, and the more indigenous alliances France sought to strengthen its position vis-à-vis both Native and English rivals, the more individuals found themselves trapped by the geopolitics of bonded service. As the eighteenth century

progressed, French recipients of Native slaves also sought increasingly to use their servants in roles equivalent to those occupied by enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.

Diplomacy alone does not explain the surge of Native slaving, and Rushfort presents a compelling argument that slavery was a tool used by France's indigenous allies to constrain and redirect French imperial ambitions in the American interior rather than as an indicator of Native weakness. "French colonists' demand for slaves allowed Indians to shape the contours of alliance to their advantage against French wishes, effectively blocking French westward expansion at several key eighteenth-century moments" (p. 197). Anishinaabe peoples (Odawas and Ojibwas) undermined French overtures to the Fox by targeting these western Algonquian speakers for slave raids intended to protect the Anishinaabeg's own French alliance (and its attendant material benefits), an alliance that dated to the seventeenth century.

The potential overtures by the Fox (and also the Sioux) to the French in the first half of the eighteenth century (ironically predicated on their own gifts of slaves from other Indian nations) gained no traction as the Great Lakes Anishinaabeg who had forged earlier ententes with France, stymied imperial administrators by raiding and making war on the Fox. They then cemented their own bonds with France through the gift and sale of these individuals to the French. These tactics successfully prevented a rise in French influence among Algonquian and Siouan speakers beyond the Great Lakes and forced the French empire to accommodate Native boundaries of sovereignty. Another consequence was to transform radically the nature of enslavement within Indian communities and make French military officers in the borderlands interested parties in the extension of this trade in humans. Over the course of the eighteenth century, slavery ceased to be a means of Native population replacement. In the course of the Fox Wars and with the need to maintain French alliances, demand rose for the gift or sale of Native slaves further east. From their Native interlocutors, French recipients of this human abundance learned "ideas about what role those captives could play in their society" (p. 252).

Throughout *Bonds of Alliance*, and especially in chapters four, five, and six, Rushforth carefully traces the lived experiences of slaves passing through the *pays d'en haut* and the routes by which such individuals reached Montreal, their most likely destination. On these journeys, slaves passed between Native and French masters, and Atlantic forces began to shift the contours of indigenous slavery beyond the initial understandings Rushforth outlines in the first two chapters. "Although characterized by coercion and sexual violence, in no sense could this be considered a form of racial slavery," Rushforth writes, but he also argues that in the importance given to the expropriation of productive (and increasingly, reproductive) labor of slaves, "aspects of slavery in New France's western posts more closely resembled its French Atlantic counterpart" (p. 274). And in a subtle but convincing argument, Rushforth points out that French generosity and reciprocity through gift-giving in the western borderlands was predicated on enslaved Indian labor, very much mirroring Atlantic African patterns.

The wealth of material on Native slavery and, in particular, on the lived experience of the enslaved brings a welcome dimension and nuance to histories of colonial Montreal and the interior lives of bonded peoples. Whenever possible, Rushforth utilizes the names and origins of his actors to reinstate them actively into the historical record and mitigate some of the violence directed at them in their lifetimes. Case studies of enslaved men and women in Montreal as well as at posts like Michilimackinac, help Rushforth unpack the meanings of "freedom" and "slavery." Court cases enable Rushforth to suggest how the lure of unfettered mastery enjoyed by slaveholders in the Caribbean increasingly seduced Montreal's growing slaveholding population into exploring new and creative ways to exert control over the bodies of the men, women, and children in their households, including selling these individuals to the plantations of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Yet, as Rushforth notes, the *panis* "never left Indian country" (metaphorically) and remained "embedded in a Native political economy that placed unique demands on slaveholders and slaves alike" (p.300). Attempts to standardize the Atlantic and continental laws of slavery ultimately failed when France ceded Canada to Britain at the 1763 Treaty of

Paris. The epilogue of *Bonds of Alliance* compellingly proposes that a British misreading of the intricacies of Native slavery and its role in maintaining European-indigenous agreements provoked the warfare and imperial challenges commonly called “Pontiac’s War.”

Rushforth’s research is impressive, bringing together sources from the French colonial archive as well as regional documentary resources in Canada, and the writing vividly brings to life the world of the Indian slaves in New France. Yet, the breadth of this book’s subject matter and the complexity of the relationships discussed also mean that Rushforth outlines and raises more questions than he can satisfactorily answer. For example, the issue of cost is not clearly articulated throughout, which undercuts Rushforth’s statement that the French and Indians held an “expansive not expensive alliance” (p. 205). Similarly, Rushforth masterfully explains how Odawa hatred of the Fox and slavery constrained the extension of French influence further west, but leaves the source of that enmity hazy. Within the key centers of interactions such as Michilimackinac, Detroit, and Montreal, Rushforth admirably explicates some slave networks and relationships while leaving others unexplained. For instance, *Bonds of Alliance* emphasizes the importance of godparents (Native and French) who oversaw the baptism and religious instruction of enslaved individuals (especially notable in chapter five) but does not expand on what these relationships actually translated to: obligations from godparent to godchild or perhaps an expansion of prestige? Another similar question on networks arises regarding Montreal, the ultimate terminus of many Native slaving routes. By the early eighteenth century, the city was surrounded by *réserves*, and many of the residents of these communities, including Kahnawake and Odanak, participated in a trade in human flesh drawn from New England captives as much as Native rivals. What was the nature of slavery in these communities, by contrast to the experiences in Montreal? These questions do not undermine the depth or persuasiveness of Rushforth’s overall argument. Indeed, they testify to a well-crafted, detailed history and exciting narrative that cannot but leave the reader hungry for ever more information, without knowing what may or may not be accessible in the remaining archival record.

Remaining larger questions concern the Atlantic and Native Studies dimensions of this slave trade. Although Rushforth opens and closes with comparisons of Native and French interpretations of slavery, he makes the reader wish for more material from France and the Caribbean to stand alongside the detail he gives on North America. When describing the transformation of French territorial goals at the end of the seventeenth century, Rushforth suggests that the assignment of Louis-Hector de Callière as New France’s governor general stemmed from his position as younger brother to Louis XIV’s talented diplomat, François de Callière, then negotiating the 1696 Treaty of Ryswick. The reader is not told how French politics, wars, and notions of sovereignty helped shape realities in New France. On the flip side, what were the effects of Native slavery on the American interior? The epilogue persuasively demonstrates how leaders like Pontiac feared their own enslavement at British hands (aided in this perception by “helpful” French translators, p. 375) and actively changed the terms of engagement through military action. Given the new understanding of slavery and new imperial system being proposed by British officials, this closing invites the question as to the legacy of Native slavery. Such open questions show the extent to which Rushforth has laid a strong foundation for productive studies to follow his own.

Without a doubt, the close attention Rushforth gives to Native peoples who constrained French imperial policy through slavery and war significantly expands a current literature that includes works by Kathleen DuVal, Tracy Neal Leavelle, Michael Witgen, and Sophie White among others, a literature that furthers our understanding of a Native America where Indians, not French brokers, determined relationships, definitions, and practice.[4] *Bonds of Alliance* demonstrates the remarkable fact that what we have long called French history was not necessarily made only in France or solely by French individuals.

NOTES

[1] Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); William Ramsey, *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[2] Marcel Trudel, *L'esclavage au Canada français: histoire et conditions de l'esclavage* (Quebec, CA: Presses universitaires Laval, 1960) and *Deux siècles d'esclavage au Québec* (Montreal, CA : Hurtubise HMH, 2004).

[3] Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[4] Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Tracy Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

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