One of the duties of an interpreter was to witness deeds on the occasion of the Indians conveying portions of land to the Dutch or English as gifts, or for money or trade. Jacques, unlike his brother-in-law, Pieter Van O'Linda, who wrote his own name on the Schenectady petition of 1672, simply signed "The mark AC of Akus the interpreter" on a deed which he witnessed for the Mohawks at Albany in 1683, suggesting his lack of the first rudiments of education.[1]

Before Schenectady was burned, Robert Livingston had been one of the Patroon's men in Albany who had refused help from Jacob Leisler at Manhattan. Educated in Rotterdam, Livingston had come to Albany the year before the death of Cornelis. He spoke Dutch fluently, and learned so much about native relations and trade upon his arrival that he was soon appointed secretary to Rensselaerswyck and town clerk of Albany. Later he became secretary to the Board of Commissioners of Indian Affairs for the entire colony.[2]

It is in Livingston's meticulously kept records that we find reference to Jacques in June 1677, when he and Daniel Janse were called by the Albany authorities to answer charges for the Mohawk chiefs that they had attacked Phillip Schyler's bowery and taken his Mohican Indians as prisoners, refusing to free them.[3] Ten years later, still in the employ of the government, Jacques is mentioned in another source along with Daniel Janse, when the two are requested by the English Governor Thomas Dongan to deliver a message to the Five Nations. In July of 1687, that same year, the same English Governor

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1 Grassman, p. 381. Reid notes on page 155 that only a few who petitioned in 1672 could write their own names.

2 The Five Nations were governed by a Commission of Indian Affairs with headquarters at Albany, which administered to their needs. (Edmonds, p. 394.)

3 Grassmann, p. 315 quoting Livingston.

had issued a lengthy document of instructions and dispatched the proposition by Akus to Wessells and Sanders at Onondage, the headquarters of the Iroquois Confederacy. Akus also interpreted for Stephanus Van Courtland, who became a rich landlord along the Hudson, a member of the Governor's council, and later the first Mayor of New York City.[1]

Jacques had served the Dutch officials, too. He was sent for by Jean de la Montagne, the vice-director of Ft. Orange, in 1663, to dispatch a message to the Mohawks asking them to come to Albany and meet with the Mohicans to settle the matter of the captured inhabitants of Wiltwyck. Governor Stuyvesant had written to Johan De Decker, a councilman, also living at Ft. Orange, asking him to obtain the release of the captives from the Mohicans. De Decker planned to let the Mohawks intervene to effect the release and brought the two courts of Ft. Orange and Beverwyck together on June 26, 1663, to determine how much ransom money each of the 45 prisoners was worth to the New Amsterdam authorities.[2]

Jacques' sister, Hilletie, according to Livingston, also acted in the capacity of interpreter. Two years after the death of Jacques, he records that she was requested to give an oath to an important Sachem of the Senecas.

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1 Grassmann, pp. 441, 443, and 457.

2 Grassmann, pp. 237, 238. Akus served as interpreter for at least 24 years. He is mentioned first in 1663 and again in 1687.

(In 1692 the Five Nations had become alarmed because the English had made peace with the Shawnees without telling them.) The Sachem through Hilletie said, " . . . [I] cannot understand the Christians can be so drunk in their minds as to negotiate a separate peace now without [our] knowledge with Indians who are [our] open enemies."[1]

Livingston exercised a great deal of authority where the Five Nations were concerned and was one of the men who, through friendship and commitment, kept the Iroquois closely allied with the English, although the French tried many ways to woo them away.

Another man, whose influence was felt at a later period, was Sir William Johnson. When hostilities broke out during what is called in history the French and Indian War, he kept the Iroquois on the side of the English. As Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the colonies, he had sat around the Five (then Six) Council fires, and the Confederacy had great faith in him because of his fair dealing with them.[2]

During the French and Indian War the Mohawk Valley in league with the English, became a barricade to invasion by the French from Canada. From the beginning the valley had protected the back door of first the Dutch, then English,

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1 Grassmann, pp. 441, 443. Hilletie was requested by Pieter Schuyler, the Mayor of Albany, to give the oath.

2 Hislop, Chapter II "Brother Warra." Mohawk volunteers served with Johnson at the Battle of Lake George, where their chieftain, Hendrick, whose speeches appear earlier in this paper, was killed.

seaboard settlements. It was, in fact, a strong shield to the whole new country and perhaps a deciding factor as to whether America should be dominated from the north by a Latin civilization or by a Teutonic culture on the south.[1] Control of the Mohawk Valley meant control of the entire land. The French were well aware of this, trying a dozen times unsuccessfully to capture it and the friendship of the Mohawks.

After the French and Indian War with the French ousted from the country, the frontier was now wide open to settlement. People pushed into the Mohawk Valley and beyond where land was the thing and "only the Indians stood in the way of acres, and townships, and counties, and colonies of empty, wonderful land."[2] Only a few men like Sir William Johnson tried to set up a boundary line between the emigrants and Indians hoping to stop the intrusion on defenseless Mohawk lands.

It was fortunate when war broke out between the French and English that the Mohawks remained loyal to the English, but unfortunate some 20 years later, when they still remained loyal to England, when the colonists rose up in revolt against the mother country during the Revolution. The British who were loyal to the crown wooed their support for the King. Once again the Mohawk Valley was militarily stragetic, guarding the west flank of the Hudson.[3]

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1 Herkimer Hist. Soc., p. 172.

2 Hislop, p. 134.

3 Ardman, p. 24.

Because of its large landowner class, however, the valley had become a Tory roost.[1] Sir William Johnson was gone, but his English influence lingered on, and his son, John, a prominent loyalist, convinced the Mohawk Nation to fight against the Americans on the side of the English. After seven years of battles, expeditions, ambushes, and murders, the Mohawks had to flee from their valley.

Their fate was unfortunate.[2] They had grown up on the river where they had first located from Canada. They were living there when the country was discovered. They had befriended the Dutch first, and then the English in a treaty which had lasted more than 100 years; and they would have continued to live and flourish in their valley, if under the influence of the British, they had not taken sides against the colonists. As a result the valley was lost to them as an inheritance forever.

This paper ends on one bright note, however. By the time of the Revolution there had been an infusion of Mohawk blood into the sturdy Dutch people who first settled the throat of the Mohawk River and then moved up its valley. In these people, proud descendants of a Mohawk Indian Princess,

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1 Reid, p. 229. Thepower of the Loyalist or Tory party was greater in New York than in any other colony. The Loyalists owned two-thirds of the property in New York City alone.

2 After the Revolution many generals including George Washington bought amazingly cheap most of the upper Mohawk River land. Soldiers also received grants. West of Ft. Stanwix "the Indians claim the land, though in time they will be pushed out," wrote an English settler (Hislop, p. 214). The campaign by Washington's General Sullivan in 1779 into the heart of Seneca, (Footnote 2 continued on page 32.)

whose blood was mixed with the hardy settlers who saw perilous times from the beginning but, who overcame through consistency and pluck, the inheritance remains intact even today; for up and down the river on either side and in nearly every town in the Mohawk Valley can be found the children of the Dutch carpenter, Cornelis Van Slyck, and his Mohawk wife, Alstock.

(Footnote 2 from page 31, continued)

Cayuga and Onondage lands left villages burned to the ground and acres of Indian corn destroyed. The troops "filled their stomachs and pockets with corn, squash, beans, cabbage, onions, turnips and just about everything else. Several even spiked their bayonets with a pumpkin or two, which led one of the commanders to call them a 'damned unmilitary set of rascals.'" (See Ardman, p. 25.)

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