



The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Studies in North American Indian History)

By Richard White

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This book seeks to step outside the simple stories of Indian/white relations--stories of conquest and assimilation and stories of cultural persistence. It is, instead, about a search for accommodation and common meaning. It tells how Europeans and Indians met, regarding each other as alien, as virtually nonhuman, and how between 1650 and 1815 they constructed a common, mutually comprehensible world in the region around the Great Lakes that the French called the "Pays d'en haut". Here the older worlds of the Algonquins and various Europeans overlapped, and their mixture created new systems of meaning and of exchange. Finally, the book tells of the breakdown of accommodation and common meanings and the recreation of the Indians as alien and exotic. The process of accommodation described in this book takes place in a middle ground, a place in between cultures and peoples, and in between empires and non-state villages. On the middle ground people try to persuade others who are different than themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. From the creative misunderstandings that result, there arise shared meanings and new practices.

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Editorial Review

Review

"...this book stands almost like a bible commentary, indispensable for an understanding of the mass of information to be digested by any reader interested in the subject....the voluminous footnotes...contain an overwhelming wealth of scholarship." Wisconsin Magazine of History

"Richard White has written a remarkable book that will change the way historians view the Great Lakes region during the colonial and early national periods. Elegantly written, thoroughly researched, and powerfully argued, the book describes in the clearest possible terms a world in the midst of profound historic change...White succeeds so brilliantly that his approach should shape the way historians conceive of relations between American Indians and Europeans in other times and places as well." American Historical Review

"This is a book of many achievements and it gets the new Cambridge series of Studies in North American Indian History off to a fine start. In the depth of its research, the range of its territory and chronology, and the number of its insights, it is a major work in American Indian history. But White's work goes further and is indispensable reading for anyone trying to understand colonial and frontier America...By helping to bridge the apparent gulf between 'Indian history' and 'mainstream' American history, the book will perhaps build a common ground of its own." Reviews in American History

"The Middle Ground is a brilliant scholarly accomplishment, one of the most impressively researched works in any field of history." Western Historical Quarterly

"In the breadth of its chronological and geographical scope, the depth of its research, and the sensitivity of its analysis, Richard White's book is an extraordinary achievement. Mapping the landscape of 'the middle ground' that native and colonial peoples sought to create in the Great Lakes region, Professor White has done more than chronicle, with unprecedented clarity and fairness to all players in the drama, the early history of that vast expanse. He has also provided historians with a new means of understanding relations between natives and newcomers all across the continent. As a powerful metaphor and as a splendid work of history, The Middle Ground should stand with Francis Jennings's The Invasion of America as offering a new and exciting vantage point from which to view the American experience." James Merrell, Vassar College

"In this extraordinary book, Richard White gives us a fascinating new account of the interactions among Europeans and native peoples during a crucial phase in American history. In his efforts to overturn traditional historical accounts which portray white conquest as inevitable or Indian defeat as absolute, he suggests the rich and ambiguous intermingling of cultures that Indians and Europeans created together in their early years of contact. The Middle Ground will change the way we think not just about Indians, but about American history generally. Scholars will be learning from and emulating this book for many years to come." William Cronon, Yale University

"Richard White's book is one of the most impressive works written in native American and frontier history in many years....White's book is an excellent one that should be of interest to all scholars of the American frontier and native American history." Laurence M. Hauptman, The Historian

"Perceiving the nonexistence of a dividing line in regions where Indians and Euro-Americans mixed, some scholars now strive to understand and explain what actually happened in those regions. Richard White's

Middle Ground is a welcome and important addition to this work." Francis Jennings, American Indian Culture and Research Journal

"This notion of the search for a common ground--or, as he prefers to call it, 'the middle ground,' coining a phrase which has now shot to fame and fortune in the vocabulary of Americanists--is brilliantly explored in Richard White's book of this title." New York Review of Books

"For historians interested in the Great Lakes-Ohio valley region, Richard White has added a new and provocative term to the discussion of Indian-white relations for the period from the mid-seventeenth-century Iroquois Wars to the War of 1812." Helen Hornbeck Tanner, EthnoHistory

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