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The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization. By Daniel K. Richter.

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the building of the material and spiritual aspects of empire. It would seem that "feel-good" history is no recent invention of the so-called politically correct.

This collection of essays dissects the "language of empire" (p. 73), shaping the indictment for the most part with the *conquistadores'* own words. When native sources are used, they illustrate how different a perceptual world the peoples of the Americas occupied when they first met the Spaniards. The Inca and the Aztec integrated the destruction wrought by the Spaniards into their own beliefs regarding the end of worldly epochs. The Spanish often seemed perplexed by Aztec poetry that mixed images of flowers with blood sacrifice and death.

Many of the essays in this volume show how much progress has been made during the last two decades in reconstructing an historical voice for native peoples in the Americas vis à vis a school of history that seemed to look at the first peoples as obstacles to progress or as grist for European ideologies.

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The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization. By Daniel K. Richter. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1992. 436 pages. \$45.00 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

Daniel K. Richter sets out to accomplish much in his work on the peoples of the Iroquois League. He is seeking nothing less than a "re-vision" of Iroquois history from the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century—placing "both Iroquois and colonial North American history in fresher fields of view" (p. 2). Given the magnitude of the task he has set for himself, it is somewhat of a surprise that he succeeds. His re-vision begins on page one and continues thoroughly and consistently throughout this study of the Iroquois's slow and subtle loss of mastery over their lands, as intruders pressed into their "world on the turtle's back."

All comes into focus through Richter's presentation of the Iroquois Cosmogenic Myth and his rendering of the Iroquois account of the establishment of the League of the Iroquois.

Throughout the meticulously researched work that follows, Richter refers back to these traditions and his interpretations of them, to give meaning to Iroquois actions, relationships, and points of view. This is not done in a romanticized way, nor in a fashion that makes the Iroquois views seem strange, but in a manner that expresses a people's attempt to explore and account for their world. Within the framework that Richter presents, the reader is able to grasp both Iroquois and Euro-American senses of the history that he describes.

Richter is not so naive, of course, as to presume to know the minds of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iroquois or Euro-Americans. What he offers instead is an interpretation, a sensible and exciting one. He has put his work in a cultural context to a much greater extent than have other traditional historians working in the field of Iroquois studies. Many have made use of oral tradition, but none has incorporated it as thoroughly into a scholarly history of the Iroquois as Richter has. It is to his credit that he has accomplished this without compromise and without sacrificing his reliance on historical data. He uses oral tradition, as it should be used, to interpret and enrich his understanding of those data.

This history of the Iroquois unfolds against the background of native worldview and the summary of prehistory that Richter presents in the first chapter. He skillfully weaves oral tradition and archaeological data together in order to explain the interrelationships in which the Iroquois were involved—kinship networks, the division of labor, relations with other-than-human beings, diplomacy, trade, peace, and war. He argues that reciprocity and exchange, or lack thereof, were the bases of most of these interrelationships. He then introduces the Iroquois story of the creation of their league, the confederation of five nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca), setting it in the framework of mourning-war relationships that were an intricate part of Iroquois culture. He depicts the leadership of the league as employing networks of reciprocity and exchange to unite minds for peace and power. He uses oral tradition, too, to illuminate written data and provide a culturally consistent picture of the league. Richter distinguishes between the league (the council of sachems holding positions established at its founding, with peace and unity as their *raison d'être*) and what he refers to as the confederacy (local, often individual leaders, with practical interests guiding their decisions and actions). According to Richter, the

two existed in parallel, the latter grappling with everyday problems, the former remaining aloof from these and providing a locus for an ideal of unity.

In his analyses, Richter conveys the subtleties of Iroquois culture, such as the intermingling of spiritual and political power, and its effects on cross-cultural interaction. In addition, he is able to make particular negotiations and relationships meaningful that would not be so without the cultural background that he provides. For example, in July 1693, New York colonial governor Benjamin Fletcher hoped to stop Iroquois negotiations for peace with New France and to have the French Jesuit Pierre Millet, who was residing among the Iroquois, delivered up at Albany. He invited some of the principal sachems and warriors who were in Albany for a conference to dine with him in private and supplied them with generous amounts of liquor along with their food. He succeeded, during the evening, in getting even Odongaowa, an Oneida who was a great friend of Millet, to profess a willingness for warfare against the French. In private conference with the leaders the next morning, he managed to extract pledges that they would stop peace negotiations with New France. As Richter explains, "All sides departed Albany outwardly satisfied, but none of the New Yorkers seemed to notice that the headmen did not accompany their final statements with presents; they spoke without the approval of their clans and villages" (p. 179). Such explanations of culturally laden behavior pervade his work, and they flow lightly from his pen, throwing light not only on Iroquois actions, but also on those of Euro-Americans and, most importantly, on the interactions between them. His narrative of Iroquois efforts in late 1693-94 to establish a general peace between the Iroquois and the French—in which the English would also be involved—and his explanation of the ways in which proposals were misunderstood time and again by Europeans interpreting them within their own cultural frameworks, are examples of his ability to convey the complexity of intercultural relations in North America.

The period from 1609 to 1720, on which Richter concentrates, was a dynamic one for the Iroquois. Diseases introduced by Europeans, growing dependence on European trade items, hostile relations with other Indian nations, the introduction of Christianity, internal bickering, attempts by Dutch, French, and English to embroil the Iroquois in warfare between European nations, and a progressive loss of control over land were ordeals that

severely taxed their strength and endurance. In his historical narrative, Richter explores in rich detail the Iroquois responses to these ordeals, and the reader must admire the resilience of the Iroquois peoples. I was disappointed, however, that he did not discuss more clearly in his conclusions the role of political structure in fostering this adaptability. His data and interpretations speak to it, but, for the most part, he views what he calls the "traditions of localism, factionalism and individual leadership" (p. 236) as somewhat abortive, as problematic, rather than as the means by which alternatives were identified and defined and realignments facilitated. In this domain, his re-vision does not go quite as far as it might.

A minor complaint of mine is his use of the labels *anglophile*, *francophile*, and *neutralist* for parties of Iroquois. There is much relevance in his use of these terms, but, given his generally exceptional ability to get beyond the biases of traditional Western history, it is unfortunate that he was not able to find more appropriate terms. Actions and stances taken by Iroquois individuals and groups given these labels were not embraced because of "love of the English," or "love of the French," as these terms suggest, but because it was determined by the individuals or groups that their best interests would be served by allying themselves with the English or the French. Although Richter uses the terms pervasively, outside the context of English and French relations they are merely Eurocentric terms used to define political affiliations.

These criticisms aside, I strongly recommend *Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* as an outstanding contribution to the study of Iroquois history and culture and that of cross-cultural relations in North America during the colonial period. It does an excellent job of providing the "fresher fields of view" that it promises.

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Painting the Dream: The Visionary Art of David Chethlahe Paladin. By Lynda Paladin. Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1992. 106 pages. \$24.95 paper.

This book chronicles the extraordinary life and art of David Chethlahe Paladin, who was born into the Bitter Water clan of the