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Jane T. Merritt. *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 352 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-5462-4.

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The Road to Indian-Hating from Pennsylvania's

The Road to Indian-Hating from Pennsylvania's "Long Peace"

As colonists from England settled the eastern seaboard of North America, their presence triggered a series of bloody clashes with the Indians of Virginia, New England, and the Carolinas, but there was no war in Pennsylvania. The colony's founder, William Penn, remained committed to his Quaker principles and soon established friendly relations with the Algonquian-speaking people who lived in villages scattered near the forks of the Delaware River. Many historians agree that the benevolent Indian policy of Penn laid the foundation for a period of "Long Peace" that lasted from 1682 through the mid-1750s.[1]

In explaining how Pennsylvania managed to avoid a war, historian Jane T. Merritt is not satisfied with the traditional focus on Quaker policies and beliefs. Were there other reasons for the "Long Peace"? And why did peace begin to unravel in the mid-1750s? In the first two parts of *At the Crossroads*, Merritt utilizes an approach similar to Richard White's "middle ground." She discovers that "roads both literally and figuratively" connected the "lives and histories" of Native Americans and European immigrant communities as they "negotiated a common space along a shifting frontier" (p. 3).[2] Even though tensions ran high at times, there was no war because "political, economic, social, religious, ethnic, and racial differences" were largely "tolerated at a local level" (p. 4). To understand how Indian-white relations in Pennsylvania took a turn for the worse in the period of the Seven Years' War, Merritt broadens the scope in the third and fourth parts of her book by situating cultural relations within an imperial context. During the 1750s and 1760s, "once-distrusted confederations and empires" became sources of "protection and support" (p. 4), as frontier inhabitants separated themselves–racially, geographically, and politically. By the early 1760s, Merritt argues, differences based on race closed the roads that once connected "cultural communities" (p. 308). Developed in eight topical chapters, and grounded in extensive research in German Moravian and English language sources, *At the Crossroads* is an ambitious and provocative study of the end of peace and the emergence of racial hatred on the Pennsylvania frontier.

The book begins in the period of early frontier settlement. Indians and colonists (mostly Germans and Scots-Irish) who lived on the fringes of the British empire navigated the channels of local relations "to negotiate the parameters of power" (p. 22). They shared resources and land, and evaded the authority of the province and the Six Nations Iroquois. Chapter Two examines the economics of local relations. Trade and exchange by the 1740s satisfied native customs of kinship and reciprocity as well as the needs of settler communities. Merritt presents new arguments concerning the roles of Indian women in Pennsylvania's frontier economy. Delaware and Mahican women established kinship ties with Moravians and fur traders, and also extended subsistence roles outside of traditional village boundaries.

Merritt focuses in the second part on the mission towns where Algonquian-speaking people and Moravians came to share some common ground of understanding. In contrast to Gregory Evans Dowd, who stressed the "pan-Indian" militant resistance movement to Protestant mission teachings, Merritt uses Moravian records in Chapter Three to reconstruct a period of spiritual revitalization in which Native Americans borrowed from Christianity to create complex forms of belief.[3] The life stories (*Lebenslauf*) in appendix A demonstrate that baptism fulfilled the spiritual needs of native converts. By the 1740s, reformers indeed challenged the teachings of missionaries, but even the Delaware prophet Neolin "had to understand Christianity's concepts" (p. 92). Merritt again utilizes Moravian accounts in Chapter Four to explore the connections between Indians who lived in and outside of mission towns. Delawares and

Mahicans maintained traditional ethnic boundaries but engaged in relations with missionaries who tried to introduce Christian marriage practices and a new gender division of labor.

Sensitive to the demise of the accommodation in mission towns by the 1750s, Merritt turns to a familiar topic in the field of early American history: the downward spiral of relations between the British empire and native peoples during the Seven Years' War. On the mid-Atlantic frontier, the precipitous decline of toleration was a result of external pressures–the province increased its authority and settlers swelled in numbers, while imperial military forces and the Six Nations Iroquois tried to assert their dominion. In her fifth and sixth chapters, however, Merritt sheds new light on the period by showing that decades of cultural exchange had made war and diplomacy intimate points of contact where familiarity bred contempt. Indians and settlers killed each other as neighbors. The burning of houses and slaughtering of colonists led to a "demonization of Delawares." According to Merritt, this was "the first step in creating a racialized image" (p. 197) that did not distinguish friendly Christian Indians from hostile enemies. Relations at the treaty table could no longer foster metaphorical friendship. In councils, Delaware leaders like Teedyuscung, Quakers, and other provincial officials, quarreled over who was responsible for "the demise of amicable interdependence" (p. 202).

After the war, drawing "geographical lines on the map" (p. 266) or constructing forts could not satisfy a pressing need to establish new boundaries between settlers and Indians. The fourth part of *At the Crossroads* thus shifts into the postwar period and an insightful discussion of the explosive combination of race and nationalism. To show how backcountry settlers used Indian-hating to transform themselves into British subjects, Merritt devotes several pages of chapter 8 to an incident in 1764 when the Scots-Irish Paxton Boys slaughtered friendly Conestoga Indians. Applying some of the analytical tools of postmodern cultural theory, she uncovers a Paxtonian formulation of the "bad Indian," a racialized image of America's native peoples with roots that extended back to the contact period. The political message in their pamphlets clearly was anti-Indian and pro-British as it singled out Pennsylvania's "savage" race of Native Americans as the real threat to the interests of the English (p. 266). Indian confederacies also developed a sense of nationalism–a view of themselves as "one race" (p. 301)–to support their political aims and distance themselves from their European neighbors. As her last chapter makes clear, the new racial divisions between "white" and "Indian" marked the end of a period of toleration and intercultural cooperation on the Pennsylvania frontier.

Throughout the book, Merritt skillfully brings together evidence from German and English sources to recreate the "cultural crossroads" where Indians and Euro-Americans met and negotiated their differences. In relying as heavily as she does on translated Moravian accounts, and organizing the book's arguments and chronology around a study of life in the mission towns, Merritt does not venture far enough from Moravian settlements and deep into Penn's woods where she would have discovered more hostile relations. Readers who are skeptical of *At the Crossroads* should consult James H. Merrell's *Into the American Woods* (1999). His book focuses on the cultural "go-betweens," men like Conrad Weiser and Andrew Montour, who translated and negotiated at treaty tables, trading posts, and Indian villages. According to Merrell, there was little room for a "middle ground" in the woods of Pennsylvania where "go-betweens" even came to recognize "the existence of *English ground* and *Indian ground*, of *us* and *them*, [as] non-negotiable."[4] Merritt does not use her introduction or footnotes to compare her findings with Merrell's work.

There are also problems with Merritt's interpretations of British imperial policy and the Paxton controversy. By the end of chapter 7, Merritt claims that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 still considered Indians British "subjects" (p. 263). The Proclamation, in fact, tried to establish a dividing line between Native Americans as separate groups protected by the king and Anglo-Americans as the king's "subjects," although the measure could not stop the inevitable advance of colonists into Indian country. Furthermore, Merritt overlooks an important piece to the Paxtonian racial argument. In their pamphlets defending the Conestoga murders, Indian haters broached the idea of Delaware removal, though Moravian missionary work helped stall the loss of native lands.[5] Why Merritt does not pay more attention to the connections between Indian-hating and Native American dispossession in Pennsylvania is unclear, especially since she maintains that the Paxton episode "set the tone for" later periods of American frontier expansion and Indian removal (p. 14).

These criticisms should not discourage readers from appreciating Merritt's wonderful study of Pennsylvania. In shedding new light on the "Long Peace," Merritt successfully shifts the focus onto frontier intercultural relations and away from Quaker Indian policy. *At the Crossroads* is a richly nuanced and deeply researched account

of Indians and settlers who worked, prayed, lived together, and, in turn, managed for years to fend off an interracial war. She displays a sophisticated and at times brilliant understanding of the various ways colonial and imperial forces influenced the kinship networks, gender roles, economic ties, religious experiences, and ethnic conflicts of Delawares and Mahicans. Her book is a useful model for other regional and community-level studies. Merritt's fine work is also a dramatic reminder that the road to American Indian-hating and empire building led back to colonial Pennsylvania. Indeed, *At the Crossroads* will change scholars' views of the mid-Atlantic region, the British empire, and the place of Native Americans within both.

Notes:

[1]. Englishmen fought the Powhatan Confederacy in Virginia (1622 and 1644); Puritans of Southern New England fought the Pequots (1637) then Metacom's Wampanoag forces (1675-1676); and South Carolinians faced off with a confederacy of Catawbas, Yamasees, Creeks, and Cherokees in the Yamasee War (1715-1718). For a summary of Penn's "Holy Experiment" see Gary B. Nash, *Red, White & Black: The Peoples of Early North America* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996), p. 97.

[2]. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[3]. Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

[4]. James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1999), p. 38.

[5]. Gregory Evans Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 178, 198-199.

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