

genitors" (414). It is a lesson that the twenty-first-century West and Middle East, both peopled by the descendants of the same religiously inspired conquistadors, must relearn if we are to avoid the escalating violence of our ancient past.

University of Georgia

PETER CHARLES HOFFER

The Edge of the Woods: Iroquoia, 1534–1701. By JON PARMENTER. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010. xlix, 474 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$49.95.)

The Edge of the Woods argues that historians have made too much of the rooted fixity of local Haudenosaunee Iroquois agricultural communities. The emphasis instead should be on their people's "unsurpassed level of geographical knowledge of northeastern North America" and how that knowledge undergirded a flexible strategy to "link supposedly 'scattered' and 'fragmented' communities in a wide-ranging, often fluid, yet interconnected indigenous polity" (xi). Parmenter organizes his book around the major stages of the "Woods Edge" ceremony—an Iroquois ritual that mediates between the village and the forest, the fixed and the mobile, the peaceful and the warlike—and offers each stage of the rite as a metaphor for a distinct period of an Iroquois history lived in a constantly redefined geographic space.

The point about mobility is well taken, although it requires a curious lack of attention to the gendered ways in which *both* fixity and mobility are woven throughout Haudenosaunee history. In critiquing earlier scholarship, Parmenter assails mostly unnamed historians whose work "continues to anticipate the inevitable conquest of the continent's indigenous population by settler society" (xxviii–xxix). Yet apart from a few diehard technological determinists, one is hard pressed to find anyone writing since at least about 1980 who has argued that the European conquest was inevitable. Parmenter is particularly critical of those who rely on a technique that William N. Fenton called "upstreaming," the use of later ethnographic descriptions to interpret fragmentary earlier documentary and archaeological materials (xxxi–xxxiii). Yet Parmenter is hardly the first to point out that upstreaming tends to privilege historical paths that happened to lead to the present at the expense of patterns that did not endure. Again it is hard to find any recent historian who has not confronted these perils while emphasizing contingency and the need to read the past forward rather than backward. Except perhaps Parmenter himself, who seems untroubled by the fact that upstreaming is the only way to recover the ceremony that provides his book's title and narrative structure.

The Edge of the Woods comes with an impressive bulk of scholarly apparatus, including 101 tightly packed pages of notes. But a closer look sometimes