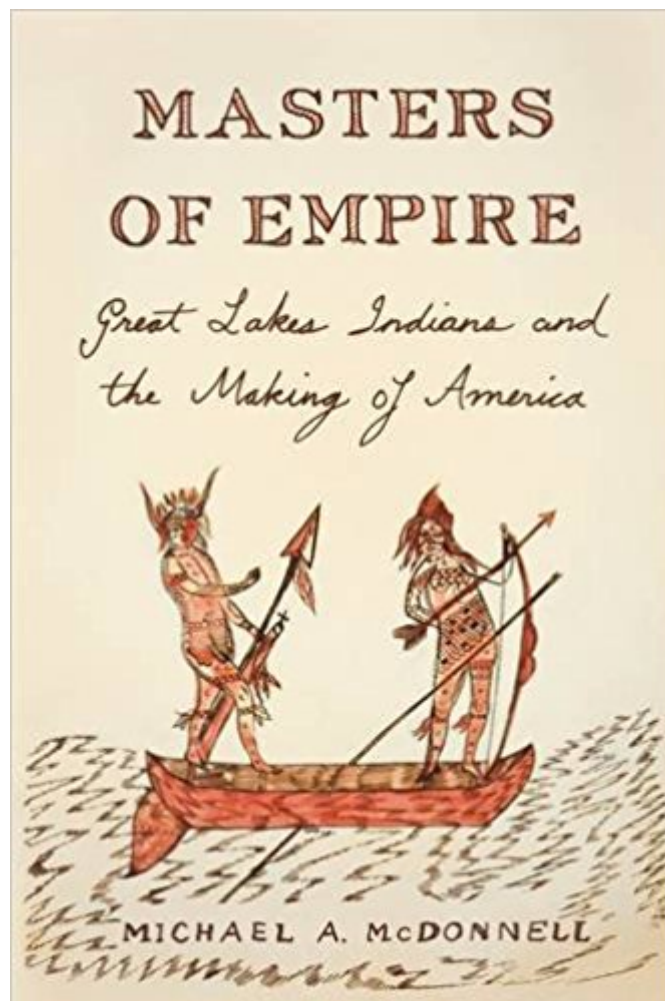


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# Masters Of Empire: Great Lakes Indians And The Making Of America



## Synopsis

A radical reinterpretation of early American history from a native point of view In *Masters of Empire*, the historian Michael A. McDonnell reveals the vital role played by the native peoples of the Great Lakes in the history of North America. Though less well known than the Iroquois or Sioux, the Anishinaabeg, who lived across Lakes Michigan and Huron, were equally influential. *Masters of Empire* charts the story of one group, the Odawa, who settled at the straits between those two lakes, a hub for trade and diplomacy throughout the vast country west of Montreal known as the pays d'Île aux Hurons. Highlighting the long-standing rivalries and relationships among the great Indian nations of North America, McDonnell shows how Europeans often played only a minor role in this history, and reminds us that it was native peoples who possessed intricate and far-reaching networks of commerce and kinship. As empire encroached upon their domain, the Anishinaabeg were often the ones doing the exploiting. By dictating terms at trading posts and frontier forts, they played a crucial part in the making of early America. Through vivid depictions--all from a native perspective--of early skirmishes, the French and Indian War, and the American Revolution, *Masters of Empire* overturns our assumptions about colonial America. By calling attention to the Great Lakes as a crucible of culture and conflict, McDonnell reimagines the landscape of American history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“McDonnell . . . deploys impeccable research skills to challenge the middle grounds historical interpretation of Native American-European encounters . . . With a fascinating reexamination of the political, military, and economic details of the war, as well as a

stunning final chapter on the American Revolution and the meaning of (in)dependence, McDonnell admirably expands readers' understanding of Indian country on its own terms.

—Publishers Weekly

“McDonnell skillfully captures the history of the [Anishinaabeg] from the 17th century through the early 19th century, restoring the nation's legacy and filling in a vital historical link in the timeline of the Americas.

—Kirkus Reviews

“In clear and compelling prose Michael A. McDonnell renders a complicated world accessible, a marginalized region central, and a neglected history essential. Rethinking pivotal events from indigenous centers like Michilimackinac rather than from colonial capitals like Boston or Williamsburg, *Masters of Empire* provides an important perspective for a richer understanding of early American history.

—Collin G. Calloway, John Kimball Jr. 1943 professor of history, Dartmouth College

“In recent years scholars have begun to argue that the center of America's historical gravity should shift from the East Coast to the heart of the continent. Michael A. McDonnell's *Masters of Empire* makes an important contribution to that reorientation. Piecing together the story of the Anishinaabeg in general and the Odawa of Michilimackinac in particular, McDonnell offers a new perch from which to view the course of human events during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thereby making a powerful case for Michilimackinac's joining Boston, Philadelphia, and other, better-known capitals vital to understanding America's past.

—James H. Merrell, Lucy Maynard Salmon Professor of History, Vassar College

“This is a sweeping and majestic analysis of the colonial Great Lakes, which places the Odawa people at the heart of a new understanding about how the French and later, the British were thwarted in their attempts to shape and control this region.

—Susan Sleeper-Smith, professor of history, Michigan State University

“With elegant prose and a keen eye for detail, Michael A. McDonnell brings to life the dynamic world of Great Lakes Indians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is native-centered history at its best, revealing how the Odawa and their neighbors not only controlled their own destinies in the face of colonialism, but also shaped the fabric of American life for many generations. A powerful story expertly told.

—Brett Rushforth, author of *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*

“Insightful and evocative, *Masters of Empire* compels us to rethink colonial America by restoring native peoples to the center of the story. Along vast waterways in the heart of a continent, natives controlled the intrusive but weak officials and traders of distant empires. Michael A. McDonnell brilliantly recovers and deftly narrates a tale of resourceful persistence by the Anishinaabeg.

—Alan Taylor, author of *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens,*

British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies” “With lively prose and page-turning action, Michael McDonnell introduces readers to a whole new world. Everyone interested in American history should read this magisterial tale of how the Anishinaabe Odawa lived through and shaped the history of North America and the early modern world.” — Kathleen DuVal, professor of history, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill “Michael A. McDonnell shows that for much longer than anyone has dared to imagine, Great Lakes Indians stood firm as the masters of their own destiny and powerfully influenced events as iconic as the American Revolution.” — Woody Holton, author of *Abigail Adams* “In this tour de force, Michael A. McDonnell brilliantly shows how the Anishinaabeg of the Upper Great Lakes played a crucial role in the run-up to the American Revolution. This ‘native-driven’ history will send historians scurrying to revise their interpretation of imperial and native rivalries in the mid-continent west of the Appalachians.” — Gary Nash, professor of history, University of California, Los Angeles

Michael McDonnell is an associate professor of history at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia*, winner of the 2008 New South Wales Premier’s History Award, and coeditor of *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*. He lives in Sydney, Australia.

I bought this book without truly understanding what it was about but I’m glad I read it. I have read countless books on colonial American history and this book provided a view of a Native American group I had learned only little about in previous books. It was interesting to see how a group of peoples influenced American history when the standard narrative is to dismiss them as pawns of the French or English. The book was a bit repetitive in some places but overall was an interesting read.

Well written and very informative. Taking a point of view not taken by most books about Amerindians. A must read for anyone interested in early American history.

Thanks

This was recommended to me, and is one of those books I will read again, just to digest all of the information. Would definitely recommend!

Interesting subject but poorly written and edited. Repetitive with far too much emphasis on battles between Natives and Europeans.

like reading a law text book. just fact after fact. repetitious to the extreme.

The Native Americans showed great understanding and resourcefulness when dealing with early European invaders.

Well researched with Lot of facts but to much to finished

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