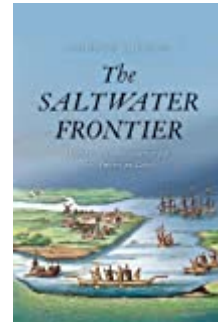




Andrew Lipman. *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. 360 pp. \$38.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-20766-8.



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A Crucible of Native Modernity

Behind Andrew Lipman's microhistory of the northeastern Atlantic coast between the Hudson River and Cape Cod hides an ambitious alternative narrative of European-Native interactions in North America. *Saltwater Frontier* draws upon recent work on Atlantic history, environmental history, anthropology, American history, and Native American history, moving away from Turner-inspired paradigms and looking east rather than west for another borderland. Turner placed the Westward expansion at the heart of the American experience; to him, the frontier was the crucible of American democracy, turning European immigrants into American citizens. Similarly, for Lipman the ocean functions as a contact zone and as such it emerges as a crucible of Native modernity not predicated on acculturation and assimilation; while the arrival of the Europeans on the Atlantic coast did push many Native communities westward, Lipman argues, it also pushed others eastward, creating new forms of interaction and new social practices. *Saltwater Frontier* builds on Jace Weaver's 2015 *Red Atlantic* (2015) and successfully demonstrates how this area was connected

to an entire global system of cultural and material exchanges. The Natives were active players in the fierce and bloody imperial struggle between Holland and England, and detailed accounts of local battles, rivalries, and colonial practices are interwoven in the complex tapestry of the Atlantic world, from military clashes to the economic booms and busts that shook the economies of the two metropolitan centers and of their imperial outposts. Fishing, whale hunting, and commerce anchored entire communities on the Atlantic coast; Native lifestyles were changed by European technologies, while Native maritime skills revolutionized colonial enterprises, with consequences that reverberated all the way back to Europe.

Using English and Dutch letters, diaries, laws, administrative minutes, estate inventories, travel accounts, war narratives, and court records, as well as Native traditions, data from archaeological site reports, maps, and historical images of vessels and forts, *Saltwater Frontier* illustrates this story via a dazzling (and at times overwhelming) number of cameos and portraits of English, Dutch, and Native sailors and settlers. Chapter 1, "The Giants"

Shore,â introduces the reader to the shoreline between Cape Cod and Manhattan and its inhabitants, and skillfully recaptures the customs and practices of local Aboriginal communities, the linguistic and cultural variety of these societies, as well as their sophisticated political arrangements. Lipman is sensitive to the ideological bias of the very sources on which he relies. For instance, he contrasts Dutch and English descriptions of Native political traditions, and points out how the writers described the same phenomena, but saw different things. The Dutch âtended to see Indian politics as highly localized and egalitarianâ and doubted the existence of hierarchies or of any authority that sachems may hold. The English, by contrast, argued that the Indians had hierarchical power structures, and described the local governments as âmixed, partly monarchical and partly aristocraticalâ (p. 43).

Chapter 2, âWatercraft and Watermen,â examines the ways in which Native seafaring shaped the contact between Europe and the New World. European colonists adopted local boat-making techniques, while Native boat builders emulated the basic architecture of foreign vessels and even borrowed the command structure and some of its trappings. Native watermen linked the social and political worlds of New Amsterdam and New England, drawing maps, translating, and transporting letters, goods, as well as people. It was these multiple encounters between two maritime cultures, Lipman argues, that enabled the Europeans to effectively colonize the continent.

Chapter 3, âThe Landless Frontier,â explores the role of coastal traders as cultural negotiators at a time of rising mercantile capitalism in Europe. Dutch and English colonialisms followed divergent paths âas each empire experimented with a distinct mixture of ideological justificationâ (p. 88). The Dutch saw control of the land as linked more to trading than just to farming, while the English saw it as exclusively linked to settlement and migration. The Dutch forged strictly business relationships with the Natives on the western part of the shore and did not aim for any close diplomatic or military partnerships, while, given the English willingness to establishing such alliances, the Indian leaders to the east came to see the latter as valuable partners.

Chapter 4, âBlood in the Water,â looks at the role of violence in the Anglo-Dutch struggle for colonial supremacy in the New World. Native leaders intervened in the bloody conflict between the two European powers; some Indian communities were wiped out while oth-

ers were shuffled around in the new coastal hierarchies where the English were slowly gaining the upper hand. Comparing the situation of the English after the Pequot War (1634-38) with that of the Dutch after Kieftâs War (1643-45), Lipman points out how the divergent military strategies the two empires pursued influenced the future of their colonial enterprises. The Dutch remained indifferent to Native customs of making war and peace, favoring the brute use of force in their military interventions; by contrast, English military dominance was achieved through sheer brutality as much as through diplomacy and the ability to appropriate Native war customs and ascribe different meanings to them, so that the English militarily and symbolically took the place of the dominant tribes on the coast.

Chapter 5, âActs of Navigation,â covers the colonial echoes of the war between the Dutch Republic and the English Commonwealth. The second Anglo-Dutch war of 1665 cemented the victory of the English in the New World. By the end of the 1660s, the Aboriginal communities were dwindling, as they were competing with more and more settlers for the land that used to be their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. The region was changing in other ways, too; the decline of the wampum industry, which had so far effectively functioned as currency among settlers and Natives, and the subsequent use of flintlock muskets as payment by the Dutch to the Iroquois Five Nations in exchange for furs, had a long-term impact on the power balance in the region, while dramatically increasing the level of violence on the continent.

Chapter 6, âSea Changes,â chronicles the years when the shore ceased being an active military front, while remaining a fluid borderland and a contested space. The focus of the chapter is the rise and fall of whaling as an example of the environmental depredation brought about by an industry created by European greed and commercialism and which benefitted from the input of Native skills. The success of this cooperation was whalingâs own downfall, as overfishing soon depleted the waters and led to the decline of the industry as a whole. Yet, thanks to whaling and other maritime jobs, Native communities remained on the coast or turned to the ocean for survival. They adapted their traditional ways to the new circumstances, converting to Christianity or venturing beyond the North American shores as far as London, New Zealand, or Sierra Leone. Seafaring brought new people from other corners of the empire into their communities, so that by the 1750s mixed Native-African children were becoming common from Manhattan to Boston. The epilogue, âWhat Need Is There to Speak of the Past?â

makes a passionate plea for a reconsideration of the narrative of Native decline and demise that still dominates the historiography, and argues that a study of the ocean as borderland can uncover the many ways in which Native history was and still is both global and modern.

Given the book's admirable effort to reposition the seventeenth-century American Northeast in a global framework, it is puzzling that the book only takes into consideration the interactions between the Dutch, the English, and Natives; after all, the French had been present in the area since the mid-1500s, and their military and trading alliances with the Iroquois, not to mention the intermarriages with other Native populations, had already left their mark—political, cultural, and demographic—on this part of the New World. Just as the coast

between Cape Cod and the Hudson was inextricably tied to the rest of the Atlantic world, it was equally part of a complex system of inland fur trade set in place by the French, and an examination of these connections would have further enriched Lipman's project. Nevertheless, in its sweeping narrative, engaging style, minute research, and compelling argument, *The Saltwater Frontier* represents an important contribution to the growing fields of Atlantic studies and Native studies. As such, it should interest specialists in Atlantic history, American history, and Native American studies, and hopefully will spur the work of other scholars to build on its example.

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