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Keith R. Widder, *Beyond Pontiac's Shadow: Michilimackinac and the Anglo-Indian War of 1763*. East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 2013. Pp. xxviii, 331. ISBN 978-1-61186-090-0.

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Belying its weighty and oversized coffee-table book format and lavish illustrations, maps, and photographs, *Beyond Pontiac's Shadow* is a solid academic study that melds ethnography with the military history of the Michilimackinac borderland—"the geographical heart of the continent" (xviii)—in the years before, during, and after the Anglo-Indian War of 1763.

Few are better qualified than Keith Widder to write on Michilimackinac—the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century entrepôt at the northern tip of Michigan's lower peninsula that served as the French Empire's access point to the Indians and lands of the *pays d'en haut* (upper country). As the longtime curator of history for Mackinac State Historic Parks (1971-97), Widder had unparalleled access to the park's extensive collections of archeological and material-culture artifacts. To contextualize Michilimackinac in the time of "Pontiac's War," he draws on social and cultural histories of native people, French-Canadians, and Métis (offspring of French-Indian unions) as well as studies of the fur trade in the Michilimackinac borderland and a rich haul of archival documents in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

The Indians' capture of Michilimackinac on 2 June 1763, putatively at the urging of the Odawa sachem (chief) Pontiac, is a superficially well known story. Ojibwe warriors used a game of baggataway (lacrosse) as a ruse to gain access to the fort, then massacred most of the British garrison and took the rest as prisoners. From there, most military histories move to the British Army's campaigns to punish Pontiac, retake the forts in the Ohio Country, and find a *modus vivendi* with the Indians of the Transappalachian West; Michilimackinac itself before and after the massacre gets little attention. By contrast, Widder aims to probe

beyond his [Pontiac's] shadow by allowing Native people, Canadians, and British in the Michilimackinac borderland to tell us how they lived their everyday lives and their story about their participation in the war. From there we learn why the assault on Michilimackinac did not ignite a broader war in the upper country; instead, nearly all of the Native people in the Michilimackinac borderland coalesced around the British, their recent enemy, rather than join in their expulsion from the Indians' homelands. As we listen to them, we discover why this happened and that the unexpected was not so surprising after all. We learn from them that the attack was a story within a larger story. (xvii)

In ten chapters and an epilogue, Widder explains the various actors' views of the missteps that led to the war and the complicated efforts to resolve it. In chapters 1, "Michilimackinac, 1760: At the Heart of North America," and 2, "Michilimackinac, 1761: A French-Canadian, Odawa, and Ojibwe Community," he sets the stage by describing the mixed community at Michilimackinac. By 1760, a generation of warfare and Britain's victory over France had "undermined and weakened" a carefully constructed and maintained Franco-Indian status quo. With the threat of the coming of the British, the people of the *pays d'en haut* lived "in a state of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty" (30).

Chapter 3, "Detroit, 1760-1761: The British Enter the *Pays d'en Haut*," tells the story—Widder calls it a saga—of "Indians, British, French-Canadians, and Métis struggling to build an enduring peace and viable fur trade based on trust" (55) after Robert Rogers took possession of Detroit for the British in late autumn 1760. Winter weather prevented Rogers from continuing to Michilimackinac, which gave the people of the borderland time and space to observe and assess the British. They did not like what they saw, and, in chapter 4, "Michilimackinac, 1761: British Troops Take Possession of the Fort and the Posts at La Baye and St. Joseph," Widder describes how they watched with growing apprehension as the British garrisoned (albeit with only a few troops) the upper country near the present-day towns of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Niles, Michigan.

British agents on the ground—fur trader Alexander Henry at Michilimackinac and Lt. James Gorrell at La Baye, for example—quickly realized that, if the empire was to prosper in the *pays d'en haut*, they must reassure Indians and Canadians that the British had no intentions of seizing their land and that they would continue to have access to inexpensive goods without over-regulation of the fur trade. Imperial administrators, however, thought otherwise. Sir William Johnson proposed unworkable plans to restrict trade to licensed agents and posts. Indians and French-Canadians, understandably, protested, but Gen. Jeffrey Amherst viewed them as a conquered people and planned to use British soldiers to “impose their will” upon any who might have the “temerity to resist his efforts to establish British authority in their homeland” (93–94).

Chapter 5, “Prelude to War, 1762–1763: Amherst’s Policies, Native Unrest, and the Diplomacy of Thomas Hutchins and James Gorrell,” explains how continued British heavy-handedness alienated most of the Indians and French-Canadians in the *pays d'en haut*. Chapter 6, “Michilimackinac on the Brink, Spring 1763,” describes a community on the edge of a “violent upheaval” (125) in spring 1763. Chapter 7, “Michilimackinac, Summer 1763: Attack, Exile, Diplomacy, Loss, Repatriation,” turns to military strategy and operations:

A torrent of activity during the summer of 1763 saw local Ojibwe defeat the British militarily, only to see an alliance of Odawa and Indians from La Baye stop the victors in their tracks. Amazingly, the violence of June 2 soon gave way to British officers, with the help of the Odawa, reasserting limited imperial authority, which the Odawa and La Baye Indians soon eclipsed when they gained control of events after two grueling weeks of negotiations with the Ojibwe.... The occurrences of the previous six or seven weeks had demonstrated that no one group controlled either the fort or the upper country. In order for the fur trade to work, Native people, Canadians, and British had to come to trust each other before peace could be reestablished. (167)

Chapter 8, “Crown Officials Respond to Calamity, Late 1763 and Early 1764,” addresses Sir William Johnson and Gen. Thomas Gage’s divided and ineffective response to the crisis, while chapter 9, “Prelude to British Reoccupation of Fort Michilimackinac, 1764,” concerns the better focused British efforts of the first half of 1764 to produce peace through armed force and coercion masked as diplomacy. Chapter 10, “The British Return to Michilimackinac, 1764–1765,” and the epilogue show that, in the end, the British could not impose their will on the borderland. Peace returned to Michilimackinac because Maj. Henry Gladwin and other Army officers allowed the Indians and Canadians of the *pays d'en haut* to resume trading furs on their own terms: “The bloodshed inside Fort Michilimackinac had taught the British that it was in their best interest to fit into the existing social and economic order in the upper country rather than remake it in their image” (224).

Three interesting if tangential appendices are devoted to French-Métis Michilimackinac families, Lt. Diethrich Brehm’s 1760 and 1761 reports on and surveys of Detroit and the eastern portions of the Ohio Country, and Robert Rogers’s deeds to lands on Lake Superior.

Beyond Pontiac’s Shadow is primarily a narrative account concerned as much with ethnohistory as military history.¹ Avoiding the argumentative approach taken in some very good recent books on Pontiac’s War,² it shines at offering context and understanding of the metaphorical and physical “Middle Ground” described in a classic study by Richard White³ that strongly influenced Widder’s thinking. I highly recommend *Beyond Pontiac’s Shadow* to anyone desiring a wider perspective on the history of the eighteenth-century North American frontier.

1. For a similar combination of subject matter, see Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: U Penn Pr, 2006), which plays on the Middle Ground motif in another “heart of the continent” in the Lower Arkansas River Valley, showing how native people determined the form and content of their relations with would-be European imperial masters.

2. See Gregory E. Dowd, *War under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U Pr, 2002), and David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac’s Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: U Okla Pr, 2005).

3. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 1991).