



## **Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900**

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Most histories of European appropriation of indigenous territories have, until recently, focused on conquest and occupation, while relatively little attention has been paid to the history of treaty-making. Yet treaties were also a means of extending empire. To grasp the extent of European legal engagement with indigenous peoples, *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900* looks at the history of treaty-making in European empires (Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, French and British) from the early 17th to the late 19th century, that is, during both stages of European imperialism. While scholars have often dismissed treaties assuming that they would have been fraudulent or unequal, this book argues that there was more to the practice of treaty-making than mere commercial and political opportunism. Indeed, treaty-making was also promoted by Europeans as a more legitimate means of appropriating indigenous sovereignties and acquiring land than were conquest or occupation, and therefore as a way to reconcile expansion with moral and juridical legitimacy. As for indigenous peoples, they engaged in treaty-making as a way to further their interests even if, on the whole, they gained far less than the Europeans from those agreements and often less than they bargained for. The vexed history of treaty-making presents particular challenges for the great expectations placed in treaties for the resolution of conflicts over indigenous rights in post-colonial societies. These hopes are held by both indigenous peoples and representatives of the post-colonial state and yet, both must come to terms with the complex and troubled history of treaty-making over 300 years of empire. *Empire by Treaty* looks at treaty-making in Dutch colonial expansion, the Spanish-Portuguese border in the Americas, aboriginal land in Canada, French colonial West Africa, and British India.

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