



From Time Immemorial: Indigenous Peoples and State Systems

Richard J. Perry

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Around the globe, people who have lived in a place "from time immemorial" have found themselves confronted by and ultimately incorporated within larger state systems. During more than three decades of anthropological study of groups ranging from the Apache to the indigenous peoples of Kenya, Richard J. Perry has sought to understand this incorporation process and, more importantly, to identify the factors that drive it. This broadly synthetic and highly readable book chronicles his findings.

Perry delves into the relations between state systems and indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Australia. His explorations show how, despite differing historical circumstances, encounters between these state systems and native peoples generally followed a similar pattern: invasion, genocide, displacement, assimilation, and finally some measure of apparent self-determination for the indigenous people—which may, however, have its own pitfalls.

After establishing this common pattern, Perry tackles the harder question—why does it happen this way? Defining the state as a nexus of competing interest groups, Perry offers persuasive evidence that competition for resources is the crucial factor in conflicts between indigenous peoples and the powerful constituencies that drive state policies.

These findings shed new light on a historical phenomenon that is too often studied in isolated instances. This book will thus be important reading for everyone seeking to understand the new contours of our postcolonial world.

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