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Review of *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny*.
By Robert J. Miller

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BOOK REVIEWS

Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny. By Robert J. Miller. Foreword by Elizabeth Furse. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006. xix + 214 pp. Notes, index. \$49.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

In recent decades, scholars have reshaped our understanding of *conquest*, and as a result the idea of *conquest* is an unsettling one. Robert J. Miller's original and important work should launch a similar transformation for the idea of *discovery*. Associate Professor at the Lewis & Clark Law School and Chief Justice, Court of Appeals, Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Community of Oregon, Miller persuasively argues that the principle of international law known as the Doctrine of Discovery provided the legal rationale and framework for the westward expansion of the United States. It, too, he argues, accounts for the troubling history of "domination and conquest of the Indian nations" by the United States.

Miller contends that the evolving Doctrine of Discovery, although apparently never explicitly codified, was well understood by leading political figures throughout the Anglo-American world. Miller himself identifies ten elements of the doctrine, by which competing European empires and eventually the United States worked out which among them had a legitimate, preemptive, and exclusive claim on the future right to purchase specific lands from the Indians inhabiting them, should those Indians ever decide, or be somehow persuaded, to sell. In other words, the ethnocentric Doctrine of Discovery was an elaborate set of

rules and rituals for establishing dibs on "new" territory in the contest for empire.

Restoring the Doctrine of Discovery to the history of the development of the United States in the early national and antebellum periods leads to a particularly grim account of America's westward expansion, an account in which Anglo-Americans' assumptions of their own racial, ethnic, and religious superiority are on full display. For Miller, Thomas Jefferson was the architect of the application of the Discovery Doctrine in America, the ultimate expression of which became Manifest Destiny. Jefferson was an "ardent expansionist" who "understood exactly" the Doctrine of Discovery. He sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to the mouth of the Columbia River to satisfy particular requirements of that doctrine. Moreover, Jefferson understood that the Louisiana Purchase was not a land deal but rather one by which the United States merely acquired France's Discovery rights. To obtain land from Indians, Jefferson used "dictatorial, strong arm tactics," and his methods were "devious and coercive." Miller demonstrates that whatever enlightened words Jefferson may have written about Indians, by his "actual conduct" he opposed "real assimilation." Indeed, Miller believes Jefferson quietly held "genocidal views." From such ideas grew Manifest Destiny, a specifically American doctrine "intended" to be "a disaster for the legal, cultural, economic, and political rights of the Indian Nations."

Whether or not historians agree with Miller's analysis of westward expansion, they must now address the Doctrine of Discovery

and reckon with his aggressive arguments and compelling conclusions.

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