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# THE BORDERLAND OF FEAR

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BORDERLANDS AND TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

*Series Editors* Pekka Hämäläinen, Paul Spickard

# THE BORDERLAND OF FEAR

Vincennes, Prophetstown, and the Invasion  
of the Miami Homeland

PATRICK BOTTIGER

University of Nebraska Press  
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*To Julie Bottiger and Paul Schwietz*



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## PREFACE

Why do we need another book about Prophetstown and the Battle of Tippecanoe? Originally, I had hoped to write a book about everyday experiences of the diverse Indian peoples at Prophetstown in order to understand how the town evolved—and survived—from 1808 to 1812. I thought that examining these peoples' relationships through time would help us understand the complicated nature of Indian nativism. But as I delved into the primary evidence, I was struck by the fact that Miami Indians and French traders—two sets of people adamantly opposed to Prophetstown—were also the key authors of much of the archival material. This piqued my interest. What fueled such animosity? It was hard to know where rumor ended and truth began.

To this end, I set out to consult as much of the source material as I possibly could—newspapers, treaty negotiations, personal letters, oral histories, and diplomatic correspondence. The more I read, the more I realized that perceptions of the town differed widely. I was not sure whom to believe. Anglo-Americans and Frenchmen could agree neither on the meaning of the town itself nor on the intentions of its residents. Indians felt the same way. How could I write about Prophetstown if the source material was so widely divergent in perspective?

In trying to understand the town, I came to appreciate the complicated history of the surrounding region. There was a history of the Miami homeland that needed to be told—and it was integral to what happened at Prophetstown. After all, the nativist movement at Prophetstown was not simply a reaction to American nationalism. It was also the product

of a centuries-long history in which white people played scarcely any part. And while the many biographies of Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, and William Henry Harrison do an excellent job of investigating those historical actors' connection to Prophetstown, historians doggedly situated Prophetstown within a larger discussion of nationalisms, both American and Native. But when it came to the settlement at Prophetstown and its eventual destruction, no one had examined what it meant for Prophetstown to exist in Miami country and therefore the role the Miamis and French might have played in its existence and destruction.

Thus, I decided two things: one, I would need to understand the *longue durée* of Miami history to recognize the traditional patterns and relationships that shaped the region that would eventually become the home of the Shawnee Prophet; and, two, discussions of nationalism could only be part of the historical picture rather than its frame.<sup>1</sup> Only then could I really come to understand the causes of the violence at Tippecanoe in November 1811.

Revising the history of Prophetstown to include this new perspective meant that I had to rethink the scale and boundaries of my study. The local and the national—not just one or the other—would have to guide my work. People in the Miami homeland envisioned their ethnic and national initiatives on the local level, and it was on the local level where these would succeed or vanish. In moving beyond “state-centered” histories and looking to the many Native and non-Native residents of the Miami homeland, I hoped to show that their histories were intertwined in ways not yet imagined.<sup>2</sup> The subsequent chapters face east from Indian country not necessarily to tell the story of the Miamis, but to better understand a culture of violence that was central to the physical and psychological contest for sovereignty in the western Ohio Valley during the first years of the early republic. The fight for Prophetstown cannot be understood simply by looking at American expansion or Indian nativism. By looking east, this book brings together multiple historical narratives—Miami, imperial, national, community, nativist, and republican—to comprehend how various communities used violence to protect their sovereign interests.

This template assumes that both Americans and non-Miami Indians were settlers and that their aims posed a threat to the Miamis' world. The Miamis and the French influenced regional diplomacy and shaped the course of American nationalism and Indian nativism despite the fact that their power was beginning to wane. Taking inspiration from David Preston's *The Texture of Contact*, this model demonstrates “the

weak grasp of distant colonial capitals and the [relatively] hollow nature of [national and nativist] claims of sovereignty over border lands and Native nations” while pointing “toward Native understandings of boundaries, human movement, the landscape, and historical change.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the efforts of influential leaders like William Henry Harrison and the Shawnee Prophet to destroy the Miami’s borderland in order to create bordered American and Indian places, these two men found themselves at an impasse. As the Miami and French witnessed the collapse of the Miami borderland, they maintained the ability to guide the flow of information, trade, and people through their part of the world.

Looking east from Miami country means trying to understand a Native world on Indian terms. Gregory Dowd’s seminal work on Indian nativism helps us understand the perspective of Indians who lived at Prophetstown and other similar settlements. But for the Miami, supporting Prophetstown or accommodating the Americans were perilous enterprises. Native peoples throughout the Ohio Valley used unique approaches to defend their cultural and political hegemony, including strategies for revitalization and methods for dealing with outsiders. While it might be accurate to identify one faction of Miami as accommodationist, not all fit neatly into these categories. The accommodationist-nativist interpretive framework risks situating all Indians within the context of American nationalism by presupposing the inevitability of territorial expansion in the United States. Such a perspective implies that Natives were more concerned with American aims than their own struggles. But the power and dominance of the United States was not necessarily the primary threat to Native identity or sovereignty. In fact, sometimes the threat came from within Native communities. Such disputes kept Native peoples from unifying against one another, which in turn prevented the sort of accommodationist-nativist dichotomy that frames so much of the current scholarship.

Facing east from Miami country also helps us understand an Anglo world on local terms. Rather than simply an extension of the republican state farther east, the Anglo settlements of the Illinois country and Indiana Territory were remarkably parochial, factionalized, and dysfunctional. At times they certainly dreamed of a republican world but acted in ways that undermined if not ignored it. Much like the Native communities around them, quarrels within the Anglo communities prevented the sort of national coherence that is typically ascribed to territorial Indiana. The Indian “threat” was certainly a powerful force in shaping Indiana territory, but it has for too long silenced the

deep and sometimes bloody divisiveness that wracked western Anglo communities.

Using the perspective of the Miami homeland to understand violence in the early republic allows us to see that nativism and republicanism were just two of many strategies used by Indian and non-Indian people to forge stability in times of tremendous change. Identities—national, racial, political—remained contested and weak, and ethnic and cultural debates dominated native-white relations. By narrowing our focus to the community level, I wish to move beyond labels and to understand Indians and non-Natives in the ways they understood themselves.<sup>4</sup> The result is a multilayered contest for sovereignty far deeper and richer than expansionist Americans fighting nativist Indians. It was a world where personal relationships and the lies binding them together determined the fate of the American republic.

Writing this book would not have been possible without a number of key professional and personal relationships of my own. While completing my graduate studies at the University of Oklahoma, I was lucky to study with Professor Joshua Piker. With all due respect to the written word, I cannot properly express in this short space the gratitude and appreciation that I have for him as a scholar and as a human being. The readings he selected for seminar helped me to appreciate historians who took risks and to recognize that one cannot possibly comprehend early America without understanding the history of American Indians. Our meetings during the writing stages of my dissertation were short, but packed with questions and critiques that made me think more deeply and critically. As a colleague, he has been there every step of the way, sometimes to tease me about my love for the Minnesota Twins, but mostly to remind me that writing history is a deeply introspective process that requires a strong commitment to placing yourself in the period in which you study. Every time I think of Joshua Piker, I think of the small notecard he had on his desk that read, “Work, work, work!”

Paul Gilje introduced me to the complexities of the American Revolution and the debates that surrounded it. Our discussions began with the American bid for independence, but a turn toward the War of 1812 drew me to the roots of violence in the Ohio River Valley, and thus the subject of this book. Terry Rugeley challenged me to think about the provincial nature of violence in North America and to situate my story within a North American past; in doing so, he helped me step away from the tendency to reinforce the inevitability of the American nation-state. I am indebted to Paul and Terry for showing me how it was possible to

approach the history of the Ohio Valley from multiple perspectives. In addition, I would like to thank Faye Yarbrough, Robert Shalhope, Warren Metcalf, and Robert Griswold for cultivating such a positive learning environment at the University of Oklahoma. So too did Cathy Kelly, who has since become a trusted mentor and friend.

Professor Catharine Franklin, a dear friend and colleague, has been part of my scholarly journey from the very first day of graduate school. She has read this manuscript several times and offered great advice at each stage of revision. Most of all, I am deeply grateful to her insistence that I tell an engaging story, that I write to both a scholarly and popular audience, and that I insist on writing a narrative. Bringing back to life the sometimes horrifying and at other times comical events central to my story has been a very rewarding experience. But certainly, meeting such a great friend in Catharine has been the real triumph.

When I began to delve into eighteenth- and nineteenth-century manuscripts, the Indiana Historical Society and Indiana State Library proved to be the center of my archival orbit. The Lilly Library at Indiana University, the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, the Filson Society, the University of Wisconsin libraries, the Center for French Colonial Studies, and the libraries at the University of Oklahoma, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Kenyon College gave me the time and space to puzzle out historical questions. A summer seminar funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities at the Library Company of Philadelphia was a crucial part of the revision process. I was fortunate to join a group of fabulous scholars who devoted six weeks to the problems of governance in the early republic. Directors John Larson and Michael Morrison, Melissa Bullard, Christopher Childers, Thomas Cox, Andrew Fagel, Scott King-Owen, Helen Knowles, Albrecht Koschnik, Gabriel Loiacono, Daniel Mandell, Patrick Peel, Andrew Schocket, Nora Pat Small, and Sarah Swedberg made that summer a memorable one. It was a real joy to be introduced to such fine scholars and their compelling work, and to find my voice among them.

Several people have provided much-needed advice as this project moved from one stage to the next. Professor Carol Berg introduced me to the history of American Indians when I was an undergraduate at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The first book she assigned was R. David Edmunds's *Tecumseh*. I keep the same copy of it near my desk as a reminder that one book can upend our ideas about the past. Professors Elizabeth Wengler, David Bennetts, Kenneth Jones, and Gregory Schroeder also welcomed me into their classes, where they

shared a deep love for history. At a number of academic conferences, R. David Edmunds, Tracy Leavelle, John Larson, Richard White, John W. Hall, Christina Snyder, A. Glenn Crothers, and other scholars have offered pointed advice that helped me refine my arguments. At the Filson Society's Conference on the "Long Struggle for the Ohio Valley," Christina Snyder urged me to include a more thorough examination of the Miami homeland, which blossomed into a deeper appreciation for the ways in which the Miamis maintained their lands despite circumstances that appeared impossible.

Matthew Bokovoy at the University of Nebraska Press has been a good shepherd to this book and its author. Editorial comments from Matt, Pekka, and Paul have helped me immeasurably. Matt's thoughtful and diplomatic advice allowed me to shorten the manuscript considerably without taking away from the whole. Pekka's generous comments allowed me to hone the broader conceptual framework of the book by challenging me to consider the relationship between imperial and ethnic borders. This involved me making a much deeper evaluation of the scholarship on borderlands, throwing in relief the differences between Stephen Aron and Jeremy Aldeman's analysis in "From Borderlands to Borders" with that of Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett's "On Borderlands" so that I could craft a more nuanced discussion of sovereignty. Thanks to them, the final product is far improved. Comments from Lucy Murphy and an anonymous reviewer were equally beneficial, and I am grateful for their many suggestions. Equally so, the keen editorial eyes of Tim Roberts and Susan Murray have helped me polish this book for press.

It is remarkable how much my community of scholar-friends has grown over the years. Many of the people from my cohort at the University of Oklahoma have remained key sounding boards during the last six years. Professors Catharine Franklin, Sunu Kodumthara, Patti Jo King, Larry Mastroni, Sam Stalcup, Michele Stephens, Stephen Martin, Emily Wardrop, Matthew Bahar, Paul McKenzie-Jones, Damon Akins, and Mandy Taylor-Montoya are dear friends with whom I studied and celebrated. To them I offer a loud and proud "Boomer Sooner!" Former colleagues at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada, include the ever-gracious David Torrance, Hannah Lane, Kathleen Lord, Roberta Lexier, Dave Thomas, Tamara Small, Jane Dryden, Leslie Kern, Kirsty Bell, Sean Fitzpatrick, Owen Griffiths, Bill Lundell, Elaine Naylor, Will Wilson, and Marie Hammond-Callaghan. They helped to cultivate in me a love for the liberal arts that I now share with my students at Kenyon College. Nicola Foote, Frances Davey, Erik Carlson, Mike Cole, Eric

Strahorn, Habtamu Tegege, Irvin D. S. Winsboro, Mari DeWees, and Paul Bartrop cheered me on as I left the history department at Florida Gulf Coast University. Although many miles now separate us, I find it still so easy to pick up a phone to pop into their offices.

Finishing this project in the halls of Seitz House at Kenyon College has been quite special. One could not imagine a better department at a better school. And crafting the final pages of one's book so close to where the events occurred is a rare opportunity for historians. Sharing space and ideas with Glenn McNair, Sylvia Coulibaly, Wendy Singer, Janet McAdams, Ruth Dunnell, Nurten Kilic-Schubel, Eliza Ablovatski, Peter Rutkoff, Bruce Kinszer, Austin Porter, Will Scott, Bill Suarez-Potts, Roy Wortman, Andrew Ross, Pamela Burson, and two fellow Minnesotans, Jeff Bowman and Stephen Volz, made finishing this project a joy. I have spent a great deal of time along the Wabash, Maumee, and Tiptecanoe Rivers researching and writing about the history of the Ohio Valley. It is a real privilege to add the Kokosing River—where I live and work—to that list.

Much of my interest in storytelling and history comes from my family and friends. Stories were a key part of reunions, backyard parties, and road trips. My father, Gary, and mother, Mary, made sure to provide me with the best education possible. They always reminded me that education was richer if accompanied by a strong sense of empathy—that studying the history of humanity mattered little if I checked mine at the door. Jim, Dan, Katie, Katryn, Kevin, Molly, Brian, Evan, Aurora, Aiden, Emory, Danielle, Edward, Liam, and August were spared from having to take part in the crafting of this work, but they shaped in innumerable and positive ways the man who wrote it. Many thanks to my extended family—the Bottigers, the Hobans (especially Tom and Mary Kay), the Durnings, and the Gaffneys—who have welcomed me into their homes during my research trips. All historians should be so lucky as to share their archival discoveries around the dinner table. And all human beings should be so lucky to have such dear friends, including Tom and Mary Fitzpatrick, Noah and Michelle Markon, Nick and Elizabeth Dittrich, Brian and Jill Gilmore, Patrick and Stacey Malley, Michael Calcagno, Kenny and Megan Wolf, Jeff and Vicki Jurek, Ellen and Cecilia Ingham, Steve and Katie Bigus, and Peggy Hoban Chinoski.



# THE BORDERLAND OF FEAR

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## Introduction

It was early June 1812, and open war with Britain was only weeks away. But John Badollet, a settler in the Miami Indian homeland, was far more concerned with his neighbors than the threat posed by any outsider. As Badollet penned yet another letter to his longtime confidant Albert Galatin, he detailed a deep-seated fear that one of his neighbors “under the appearance of an Indian” might murder him in the streets of Vincennes, Indiana.<sup>1</sup> In a town supposedly stalked by indigenous enemies and a powerful British menace to the north, such a fear might seem irrational. It was not. In fact, the idea of a white man dressing up as an Indian to kill another white man made perfect sense.

Badollet’s feelings were not simply the product of nameless fears or personal animosities. Instead, his attitude reflected the legacy of troubled relationships in the Ohio River Valley. Born from decades of contested boundaries, these tensions were brought on by complicated diplomatic efforts between empires, nations, and local settlements. Failed diplomacy often produced violence as Native and Euroamerican communities vied to assert themselves. As a result, boundaries and borders were in constant flux, presenting almost daily challenges to Native peoples and non-Natives alike as they struggled to make their way in a world that was at times bewildering.

In the first years of the nineteenth century, Anglo-American and American Indian settlers flocked to what Americans called Indiana Territory and other places in the Old Northwest. Many great rivers,

including the Wabash, Maumee, and Tippecanoe, lay in the heart of the western Ohio River Valley. These rivers and the lands that bordered them would be hotly contested by Americans, the French, and numerous Native peoples. The Miami Indians had controlled this area for almost a century; with the arrival of newcomers, their sovereignty came under attack. Native leaders such as Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh, Main Poc, Little Turtle, and Pacanne watched warily as whites invaded Indian lands in present-day Indiana and Illinois. And Anglo-Americans did not intend to come to Indiana Territory alone. Governor William Henry Harrison hoped to bring a republican system to the territory. He also hoped to bring slaves, but to do so he would have to wrest power from the hands of diverse Native peoples.

It is a commonplace that non-Native settlers feared American Indians. But just as important, white and Indian settlers *understood* that their neighbors feared American Indians. In a world where the fear of Indians and violence shaped daily life, manipulating one's fear, or even that of a neighbor, could prove empowering. Scholars traditionally frame descriptions of western violence through two monoliths: whites and Indians. Yet the situation was much more complicated. Communities, rather than races or nations, defined the western Ohio Valley. These communities—social groups perceiving themselves as distinct from the larger society and inhabiting a specific locality—used fear, lies, distortions, and the threat of violence to advance their political and cultural agendas at the expense of their race and nation. Violence also served to reinforce nascent boundaries that formed in the western Ohio Valley. Violence was personified in the persons of the Shawnee Prophet, his brother Tecumseh, and their pan-Indian endeavor at Prophetstown. Indians and white factions constructed representations of Prophetstown to attack one another—attacks that culminated at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811.

How did this place known as Prophetstown come about? In early 1808, Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh trudged west into Indiana Territory. A host of followers accompanied them on their journey through the woods bordering the Miami and Maumee Rivers. Here they built a new kind of community. Three years earlier, in the spring of 1805, Tenskwatawa slipped into a deep trance in which the Great Spirit revealed a plan that would allow Indians to renew their culture. Tenskwatawa hoped that all of his followers would follow the guidelines “that [had] come immediately from the Great Spirit through [him].”<sup>2</sup> Tenskwatawa declared that Indians needed to unite politically and militarily in order

to resist the destructive forces of Euroamerican culture. These visions became the basis for Tenskwatawa's plan.

That pan-Indian alliance would require Indians to segregate themselves from Euroamericans in almost every way; the brothers hoped this alliance would lead to what one historian has called "the revitalization of Native American communal life."<sup>3</sup> The Shawnee brothers believed that Indians throughout North America needed to consider themselves as one; otherwise, solitary Native communities would find themselves at the mercy of a white onslaught. But the two leaders' historical fame belies the reality of the situation they faced. The brothers failed to prevent American encroachment into the Ohio River Valley. Communities of French, Miamis, and Americans exaggerated, manipulated, and misunderstood the Prophet's nativist message. They did so to empower their own agendas, which ultimately led to the weakening of the pan-Indian experiment at Prophetstown and subsequent violence.

By looking at the network of lies and rumors that developed in the Wabash-Maumee Valley, we are better equipped to understand the fluid identities, social upheaval, and sociopolitical disagreements within Indian and white communities but also conflict between Indians and whites. As Joshua Piker has demonstrated, identifying these lies allows us to trace "the intimate and powerful connections that constituted the all too fragile worlds out of which they emerged," and the ways in which Natives and whites used lies and violence to stabilize their communities.<sup>4</sup> Communities in the Miami homeland seized every possible opportunity to protect themselves, even if they had to create those opportunities by lying.

The history of violence surrounding Prophetstown was in fact the product of years of lies and rumors that shaped how outsiders understood the nativist town. Simply put, much of what we know about Prophetstown was invented. Interpreters, traders, Indians, and territorial settlers used Prophetstown as a foil for their own political and economic purposes in order to influence the development of society in the Ohio River Valley. From this process, new questions arose: What sort of threat did the Prophet pose to Miami identity? Would the French be included in the American community or shut out of it all together? Would Indiana Territory be slave or free? The ever-simmering threat of conflict in the territory meant that the answers to these questions could lead to real and destructive bloodshed, and they did.

Lying about Prophetstown led to dire consequences. Lies shaped reality, then became reality, and soon residents of the Miami homeland began

to depend on those lies to marginalize their enemies and empower and protect their communities. In Indiana Territory, lies and exaggerations appeared in newspaper debates, secret meetings, correspondence, diplomatic disagreements, speeches, and false intelligence. These falsehoods—Michel Brouillet’s lies, Elihu Stout’s untruths, William Henry Harrison’s fabrications, Natives’ falsehoods—served as the intellectual context through which settlers made decisions central to their safety. Lies tell us much about settlers’ views of themselves as well. Fears of Prophetstown were largely unfounded, but fear served as an impetus to seize Indian lands, attack political enemies, and protect trade. Prophetstown informed a system of thinking that dominated the everyday actions of Anglo-American residents; lies became the interpretive context through which settlers—Native and not—thought about borders.

Yet the violent events that transpired because of the Shawnee Prophet’s settlement at Prophetstown during the early nineteenth century were as much a part of the colonial legacies of the western Ohio Valley as they were the expansion of the American republic and the War of 1812. Historians have been too quick to tie one arena of violence to another. Decades-old relationships coupled with divisive cultural and ethnic disputes among Native and white settlements primed the region for violence at Tippecanoe in November 1811, while, according to Paul Gilje, the United States went to war against Great Britain in 1812 to “defend the commerce that sustained the growing consumer revolution” and to “secure its trade and to prevent the impressments of American seamen.”<sup>5</sup> As a result, fighting in the War of 1812 erupted along the eastern seaboard, on the high seas, and along the Canadian/American borderland.

While the conflict carried over to the Miami homeland, it only complemented decades of violence that had been commonplace and did not fundamentally alter the motives of the French, Miamis, and American settlers who continued to use the violence of the region to defend local rather than national and international interests. In fact, the violence that Anglos, Europeans, and Indians unleashed upon the Miami homeland demonstrated the inability of the American nation-state and the British Empire to control regional relationships. Although the British and Americans were intimately involved in the many “Battles” for Tippecanoe and the War of 1812, these violent episodes were rooted in fundamentally different causes. We must look beyond the mythology of the Battle of Tippecanoe to access the true historical narrative.<sup>6</sup>

If we are to understand the extent to which the legacy of colonial relationships in the Miami homeland shaped violence and fear toward

Prophetstown, we must place the settler communities within their proper spatial and historical context. Central to this new understanding is situating the Miamis and French within the worlds that they understood. Dan Richter's seminal work *Facing East from Indian Country* challenged scholars to look at Indians outside of a traditional Euroamerican and nationalistic interpretation by asking readers to imagine events from indigenous points of view. Such a task means that in order to understand the Miami world, one must examine eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources that rarely included Miami voice and testimony. Much of what we know comes from secondhand Euro-American sources. In the colonial era, Miamis were often subsumed with other Native groups, meaning that their voices tend to be described in collective form as one entity, as part of a larger Indian confederacy, or silenced altogether. However, in later years, violence wrought by the Revolutionary War and land cessions with the Americans forced the Miamis to be more vocal about their concerns and made the Americans more keen to observe Miami behavior. The historical record reflects this change in circumstances. I examine the growth of Indian and American nationalisms and the resulting violence between these entities within the context of the Miami homeland. Instead of pushing the Miamis and French to the margins of this region's history, I place them front and center and examine the ways in which American and Native settlers such as the Prophet and Harrison reacted to them.<sup>7</sup>

In order to understand those reactions, we must comprehend the patterns of settlement, diplomacy, and violence within the Miami world of the eighteenth century. These patterns demonstrate that the Miamis routinely pursued village and community interests and rarely if ever operated as a singular political entity, despite the intrusion of European imperial agents. The Miamis, like many Indian communities, eschewed centralized political leadership; that is, they did not all adhere to the same leaders. They forged alliances and relationships with Native and non-Native outsiders and manipulated regional violence to their advantage. Yet the culture of violence that existed in the western Ohio Valley was not simply physical conflict wrought by imperial armies and their Indian allies engaged in battle. It was also the threat of violence that proved empowering. Through deception and overt lies, unreliable alliances, and localized conflict, the Miamis fostered a regional atmosphere of fear and violence to protect their settlements, trade interests, and diplomatic reach.<sup>8</sup>

As Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett have argued, "We must link borderlands to European and indigenous power, envision new cores, and

embrace more nuanced definitions of power.”<sup>9</sup> The Miamis did not enjoy a martial culture with which they could seize territory and dictate terms through force, but their ability to use trade, information, and alliances to shape the behavior of others was equally persuasive. These patterns of violence continued to function as a convenient tool in the decades after the collapse of the middle ground, paving the way for the Battle of Tippecanoe and the War of 1812.

Fear made Indians and non-Natives question their physical security and porous borders, but it also forced inhabitants to question the ways in which those borders would be constructed, governed, and imagined. In a sense, fear made them see themselves. Expansion, trade, and diplomacy became dependent upon these perceptions. When the French demonized the Prophet to protect their trade interests, their lies complemented those of the Miamis, who sought to discredit Tenskwatawa in their own way. As the lies built upon one another, so too did the threat posed by the Prophet. This behavior in turn shaped larger physical and conceptual borders; all at the same time that discussions about the nation, race, and British intrigue became more prevalent.

A borderlands analysis is crucial to understanding the ways in which fear and violence reshaped the western Ohio Valley during the early 1800s. *Borderland of Fear* looks beyond the histories of present-day national borders and to understand the means by which community relationships defined borders of the Ohio River Valley. These borders were not national in the sense that they reflected the dictates of a nation-state or imperial power. Instead, these borders reflected a much more local process of ethnogenesis that played a central role in the crystallization of ethnic, racial, and political borders.

This study joins two models of borderlands studies to understand how the inhabitants of the Wabash-Maumee Valley used violence to create more stable physical spaces. The Miamis benefited from the larger imperial contest between Britain and France; their history mirrors an idea now canonical to borderlands studies—borderlands were the “contested boundaries between colonial domains.” Yet the Miamis’ influence in the region is often dismissed as a simple patina of Indian autonomy. Such a perspective rests on the assumption that Native sovereignty (and therefore borders and borderlands) are only the by-product of imperial-state competition. Pekka Hämäläinen’s study of borderlands allows us to strip away the “patina” by recognizing the multiplicity of ways in which Native peoples and nonimperial actors could wield real power. This study connects Aron and Aldeman’s study of imperial sovereignty with Pekka

Hämäläinen's discussion of cultural sovereignty to better understand the formation and violent contest over boundaries in the western Ohio Valley. Political power over space was often illusory or at least contingent upon cultural frameworks imposed by Indians. The French, British, and American empires struggled to "maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate[d] new people" because Indian peoples, in particular the Miamis, were able to coerce Europeans into their own systems of power.<sup>10</sup>

Imperial projects shaped Native spaces in the American West, but only as one factor within a larger process of borderland formation. Kinship, interethnic, and even interracial relationships were just as important, often superseding imperial policies mandating political and social hierarchies because they promised the best avenues to facilitate trade. This book looks beyond the study of European colonial domains and state-centered polities to what Pekka Hämäläinen has identified as "other turning points" of power where the "future was far from certain." Indians and Euro-Americans often operated outside the boundaries of empire, state, and race. Instead they relied upon personal and often cross-racial relationships to create stability. These relationships were ignored or often misunderstood first by contemporaries and recently by historians. As Hämäläinen argues, such relationships "functioned at scales that were often too small for centralizing institutions to control, contain, or comprehend."<sup>11</sup> With such a community-focused outlook, we can better recognize how rarely these imagined national and racial spaces came to fruition.

Despite the fact that the Miami homeland, the frontier republic, and Prophetstown existed in the minds of settlers as discrete and powerful entities, they remained weak and difficult (if not impossible) to defend after 1800. In order to determine the physical boundaries (or borders) of the territories that they claimed as their own, inhabitants had to first conceptualize and then to make clear who they were as a people. They had to make real their sovereign identities. This was an enormously difficult task given the complicated history of kinship and trade in the region. In the late eighteenth century, Miami communities began to fight for diplomatic recognition, which forced them to announce their physical and cultural boundaries to outsiders. Yet factionalism and disagreements within the Miami communities often undercut any success that they might have enjoyed in defending their borders. As Americans and refugee Indians flooded the Wabash-Maumee Valley, the Miamis lost the ability to incorporate outsiders into their communities. Outsiders

no longer respected Miami authority; many of the Miamis were partial to the Americans, who were part of a much larger trading market. Americans, the French, and Indians fought to impose their will upon each another. No one party was successful, meaning that accommodation and alliances, rather than force, became the tools through which communities protected themselves after 1795. Settlers began to vocalize their rights to the lands and to define their status in order to carve out cultural niches for themselves. People defined themselves by their relationship to local trade networks, alliances, and conflicts rather than racial or political philosophies.

But it would be a mistake to speak of this region after 1795 as either an American or Miami borderland. The region bound by the Maumee and Wabash Rivers ought to be called the Miami-American borderland because both Miami and American interests were central to the area's trade, the development of violence, and settlement. Borders remained weak and contested because no one community had established itself as sovereign. The rhetoric of Indian nativism along with Revolutionary republicanism provided the tools through which settlers defended evolving notions of sovereignty. Yet both groups routinely used the language of nationalism to hide ambitions that were far more local. People understood their sovereignty—the ability to maintain independent spatial and cultural boundaries—as contingent upon their relationships with outsiders, in particular imperial state projects, *and* their relationships within their communities. Sovereignty was not simply about political power but also about cultural continuity. While France, Britain, and the United States settled parts of the Miami homeland, their imperial ambitions remained dependent upon cultural outliers who were key to trade and diplomacy. Dependence upon these cultural go-betweens eroded most efforts to extend political sovereignty over the region.

Thus the relative weakness of the imperial state allowed communities and individual actors to exercise their own interests in ways that made clear the contingent nature of sovereignty. Michel Brouillet, a French trader, claimed to be in league with the American imperial project when in fact he was carrying papers of marque from both Britain and the United States. Brouillet wanted his family and community to profit from trading and was not interested in extending trade for a European or American empire. Miami Indians and French traders continued to shape trade and diplomacy, two key ingredients for the sort of sovereign nations that Indians and Americans alike envisioned.

Discussing sovereignty is a difficult task when looking at the multi-ethnic and multinational settlements in the Ohio River Valley. Most scholarly examinations of the Battle of Tippecanoe and the War of 1812 tend to focus on assessing the sovereignty of the French, British, or American empires. Sovereignty is often only a point of concern for historians of American Indians after Indians have lost it. *Borderland of Fear* looks at the ways in which people strived to build sovereign spaces that were sometimes collaborative and sometimes in opposition. Focusing on sovereignty rather than empires, nation-states, or nativism allows for a more balanced assessment of power relationships in the Wabash-Maumee Valley. Groups such as the Miamis did not have an empire, nor did they wish to build a nation-state, but this should in no way suggest that they lacked influence and power.

It is important to remember that Native and non-Anglo agendas have a continuity and a history of their own that is often little remarked in the current scholarship. Native and French agendas played an important role in shaping and weakening American colonialism by providing fragile American communities with convenient alliances that were often self-serving and short-lived. Despite decades of marginalization following the Revolutionary War, the French and Miamis discovered avenues through which they could protect themselves, even if that meant amplifying the threat posed by an Indian community that was also at odds with the Americans. The French and Miamis were simply unwilling to subvert their ethnic and cultural identity to a larger racial and/or national polity, whether it be at Vincennes or Prophetstown. Their actions require us to recenter our understanding of power and boundaries on communities rather than ideas of nation and race that developed years later.

Moreover, these convenient alliances were the tools through which communities began to assert themselves and to create relationships that would be central to Native and American territorial borders. While European and American governments demarcated their possessions through the use of maps and laws, the residents of the region tended to see things differently. They respected boundaries that were produced by familiar people rather than distant political entities. Whether it be a Native community's ability to control trade at Kekionga or the Americans' ability to regulate alcohol sales out of Vincennes, the boundaries of the Miami world were local in nature. It was one thing to claim lands of the Ohio Valley and something else entirely to control them. To understand the boundaries that governed the western Ohio Valley, one must understand

the realities faced by all communities in the region, not just the imagined tale of monoliths that has for so long dominated our memory.

Making real the social and political spaces imagined by the various ethnic factions was a difficult process. It required both the control of physical space and the power to attract followers through homogeneous cultural values. The growth of a more rigid and definable American nation did not occur simply through population growth and territorial acquisitions, but through a complicated process of mis-remembering. The American “nation” was not a product of the white conquest of Indians, but a chance result of ethnic factions creating a borderland of lies, a social space contingent on misinformation and exaggeration designed to protect interested parties and factions. Collectively, their lies created what one scholar calls a “shared nationalism.” Through lies, the French, Miamis, and Americans created an official history that transformed a “terrain of local and regional autonomies into a more homogenized and nationalized domain.” Residents of the Wabash-Maumee Valley created a borderland by creating a narrative the nation-state would soon employ to justify and mythologize westward expansion. In effect, local residents of the Valley empowered a floundering state by creating a narrative state officials used to tie citizens to a central “hegemonic strategy.”<sup>12</sup>

As diplomats, politicians, governors, and territorial officials defended American interests in western territories, they routinely used the tropes of expansion, racism, and violence born out of the Tippecanoe conflict to justify their endeavors. They continued a process of mis-remembering initiated by ethnic factionalism on the Miami homeland. Growing regional instability also played an important role in the ethnogenesis of Indian and non-Native communities because it forced these peoples to vocalize their ethnic identities as they defended their physical boundaries and material interests. These communities constituted social groups that inhabited similar locales and that shared a distinct identity and governing system based upon common economic and political goals. As these communities began to defend their shared interests, they typically pointed to physical spaces (homelands) that were the birthplace of an imagined identity (ethnicity) based upon categories such as common culture, language, ancestry, race, and nationality. This work identifies Americans, British, and French as ethnic groups but also uses the same term to describe the Shawnees, Miamis, and Kickapoos. The challenge to understanding this period of ethnogenesis among Indian and non-Native communities lies in recognizing that there are myriad definitions of these two terms, which were both different, evolving, and contested at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

The complexity of this story demands a microhistorical approach. This work builds on Patrick Griffin's *American Leviathan* and Peter Silver's *Our Savage Neighbors* to demonstrate that the causes for Native-white violence were rooted in intraracial factionalism, not interracial disputes. Although white settlers certainly feared Indians, much of that fear was a by-product of political and ethnic factionalism within white border communities. Although whites undoubtedly spoke of an Indian menace, they often did so to demonize their own white neighbors. As settlers realized that they could control the development of the republic by managing the growth of their territory, they seized upon Indian affairs as a means to a broader end. Taking a microhistorical approach to the early republic's frontier is not simply about the "world writ small," but in fact a demonstration of how the larger world—the territorial one—was a product of national ideals redefined and made whole on the local level. Settlers victimized each other by creating images of Indians divorced from actual realities. As war with Great Britain approached in 1812, those images fueled violence at places such as Tippecanoe, which also shaped the growing diplomatic crisis between the Americans and British.

Little has been written about the relationship between national ideologies and local realities. Particularly important are the ways in which local communities refashioned, resisted, and even ignored territorial laws and ideas of republican nationalism in order to protect local relationships. Prophetstown and the territorial capital at Vincennes represented two examples of the competing nationalisms "imposed" by peoples not indigenous to the territory. Some recent scholars have challenged the nationalistic dichotomies that have framed examinations of Native-white relationships on the Miami homeland. Robert Owens in *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer* examines the extent to which territorial governor William Henry Harrison, rather than President Thomas Jefferson, shaped and defined Indian policy for the western territories. Owens challenges scholars to examine how local actors reshaped national ideologies. Jay Gitlin's *Bourgeoisie Frontier* looks beyond the Americans to the French and asserts that the French as an ethnic group should be considered as an important influence on local society and regional identities. Rather than see the French as subsumed into the American nation-state, Gitlin demonstrates that they found ways to defend their interests despite the influx of American settlers.<sup>14</sup>

Though the Battle of Tippecanoe was fought in 1811, in some ways, the struggle for that place—and what it represented—had begun one

hundred years earlier and would continue into the 1840s. Resistance and violence defined the Miami and American borderlands, and these borderlands were as much the result of conflicting ethnic boundaries and cultural disputes as they were lines drawn by competing nations and races.<sup>15</sup> Accommodation certainly took place, but to what end? Indian and European peoples undoubtedly coexisted, but to support ulterior motives. Their overtures at collaboration concealed their own interests, which were hidden beneath a veil of misinformation.

Yet non-Indians suffered from the same cultural factionalism prevalent in Native society, which allowed “third peoples” to play a powerful role in the shaping of boundaries. By looking at the ethnic differences of Indian and Euroamerican groups within the Ohio Valley—and the pervasive lying among Indian, French, and American communities—traditional monolithic portrayals of racial and national conflict vanish in the face of what Joshua Piker calls “the fragility—the inherent, bone-deep, all-pervasive weakness—of power in both Indian nations and [Euroamerican] nations.”<sup>16</sup> In such a world, groups such as the Miamis were able to gain traction just as the Americans were able to do the same. In eerily similar ways, they both won the battles for Tippecanoe.