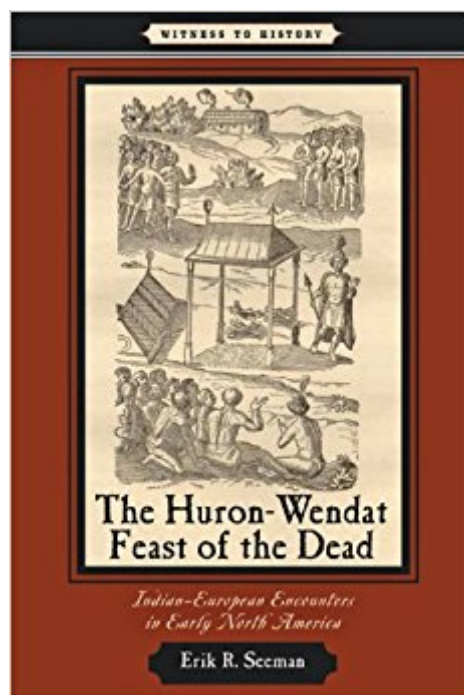




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# The Huron-Wendat Feast Of The Dead: Indian-European Encounters In Early North America (Witness To History)



## Synopsis

"Two thousand Wendat (Huron) Indians stood on the edge of an enormous burial pit... they held in their arms the bones of roughly seven hundred deceased friends and family members. The Wendats had lovingly scraped and cleaned the bones of the corpses that had decomposed on the scaffolds. They awaited only the signal from the master of the ritual to place the bones in the pit. This was the great Feast of the Dead." Witnesses to these Wendat burial rituals were European colonists, French Jesuit missionaries in particular. Rather than being horrified by these unfamiliar native practices, Europeans recognized the parallels between them and their own understanding of death and human remains. Both groups believed that deceased souls traveled to the afterlife; both believed that elaborate mortuary rituals ensured the safe transit of the soul to the supernatural realm; and both believed in the power of human bones. Appreciating each other's funerary practices allowed the Wendats and French colonists to find common ground where there seemingly would be none. Erik R. Seeman analyzes these encounters, using the Feast of the Dead as a metaphor for broader Indian-European relations in North America. His compelling narrative gives undergraduate students of early America and the Atlantic World a revealing glimpse into this fascinating and surprising meeting of cultures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book does everything an instructor could wish for by offering a historically rich, dramatic, and vividly rendered narrative that should at once engage and challenge students at all levels." (Neal

Salisbury, Smith College)"The major value of this book is in its extensive discussion of Wendat spirituality and especially of their collective burial rite." (Branka Arsic Common Knowledge)

Erik R. Seeman is an associate professor of history at the State University of New York, Buffalo, and author of *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England*, also published by Johns Hopkins, and *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492–1800*.

This book explores the last years of the Wendat's feast of the Dead ritual before circumstance changed, relocated and renamed the Wendats. The influx of Jesuits into Wendake, who are seeking to convert the Wendats, infuses the story with enough intercultural conflict to make it very intriguing read. The Wendat death rituals centered on offering material gifts to the deceased. Trade with Jesuits brought goods that enhanced their death rituals. The acculturation of European trade goods into their death rituals opens the way for the Jesuits to pursue conversion, which in turn erodes Wendat culture and beliefs. I found this to be a very entertaining and informative read. It was assigned for a Native History Class and I enjoyed trading a dry textbook for a more insightful history. Seeman does a great job of piecing together the data and crafting a good concise story. I purchased this for the kindle, which was a fantastic value compared to the paper and hard back price. It was formatted well for the kindle, including cover art and pictures, and page numbers were accessible for citation purposes.

I got this book for a college course and I was dreading reading it. After reading the book, it was very informative and a great book! I think this book is very interesting and tells you a lot about history. I enjoyed reading this book way more than I thought I would.

The text was as presented and accurate. The over-all condition was like new. The information with-in was accurate and without embellishment.

I had to read this for a class but really enjoyed it! The topic is interesting and in story like form!

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