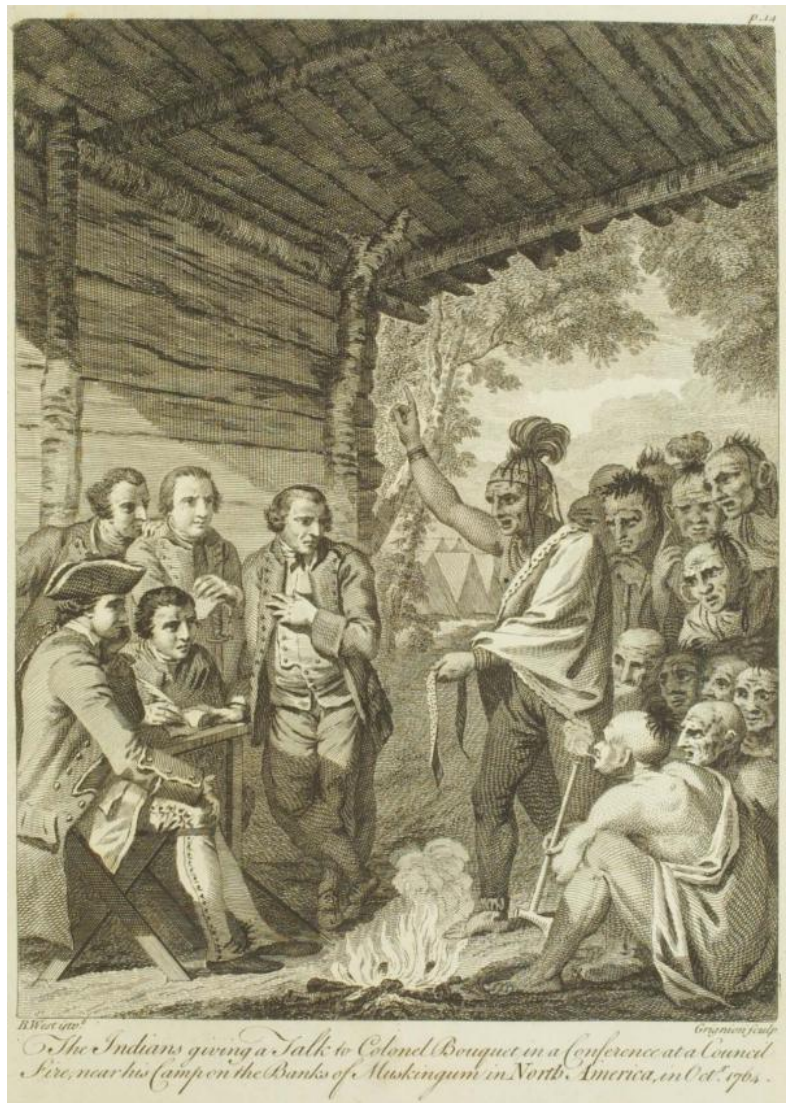


The period between 1754 and 1765, though short, saw three major Anglo-Indian wars that unleashed devastating violence and the beginnings of permanent change on the frontiers of Britain's mainland North American colonies. This geographic space was home to a metaphorical space in which Native Americans and British colonizers adapted their cultural norms and practices to make them mutually intelligible and usable. When the mid-eighteenth century's Anglo-Indian conflicts ended, the British felt less compelled to observe or respect Native practices, and this space of cultural accommodation – known as the Middle Ground – began to break down.



Scholars have tended to examine conflict on the Middle Ground through either cultural or military history. This thesis brings those approaches together by examining one aspect of these conflicts – captivity – in order to illuminate one way in which British officers and Native warriors approached the Middle Ground, how they attempted to negotiate it, and when it started to crack. First, I use colonists' captivity narratives, European treatises on the laws of war, and contemporary accounts of military campaigns to demonstrate that Native warriors and British officers imagined the idea of captivity in radically different ways. Next, using the Anglo-Cherokee War (1758-1761) as a case study, I demonstrate that the gulf between British and Native conceptions of captivity sometimes stymied attempts to use captives to de-escalate conflicts. Nevertheless, some Natives successfully bridged this gulf, adapting their uses of captives as peacemaking tools and even revising their conceptions of captivity to align more closely with European norms, as I show with a case study of the Siege of Detroit (1763). Finally, by tracking the increasing success of British attempts to force Natives to eschew their traditional conceptions of captivity for the European model of prisoner exchanges, I show how and when the Middle Ground began to break down.