



Frontier Democracy: Constitutional Conventions in the Old Northwest

Silvana R. Siddali

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Frontier Democracy examines the debates over state constitutions in the antebellum Northwest (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) from the 1820s through the 1850s. This is a book about conversations: in particular, the fights and negotiations over the core ideals in the constitutions that brought these frontier communities to life. Silvana R. Siddali argues that the Northwestern debates over representation and citizenship reveal two profound commitments: the first to fair deliberation, and the second to ethical principles based on republicanism, Christianity, and science. Some of these ideas succeeded brilliantly: within forty years, the region became an economic and demographic success story. However, some failed tragically: racial hatred prevailed everywhere in the region, in spite of reformers' passionate arguments for justice, and resulted in disfranchisement and even exclusion for non-white Northwesterners that lasted for generations.

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