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978-0-521-49757-2 - Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World,
1492-1640

Patricia Seed

Frontmatter

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*CEREMONIES OF POSSESSION IN EUROPE'S CONQUEST
OF THE NEW WORLD, 1492-1640*

This work of comparative history explores the array of ceremonies that Europeans performed to enact their taking possession of the New World. Frenchmen reproduced the grandeur of royal processions wherever possible, always ending in dialogue with the indigenous peoples. Spaniards made solemn speeches before launching military attacks. Dutchmen drew intensely detailed maps, scrutinizing harbors and coastlines as they disembarked. The Portuguese superimposed the grid of latitudes upon lands they were later to take by the sword. The English calmly laid out fences and hedges in the manner of their native shires. Through such activities each power considered itself to be creating imperial authority over the Americas; yet each failed to acknowledge the same significance in the ceremonies of other powers. This book develops the historic cultural contexts of these ceremonies and tackles the implications of these histories for contemporary nation-states of the postcolonial era.

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PATRICIA SEED

Rice University



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