AMERICAN COLONIES

ALAN TAYLOR

The Penguin History of the United States

Eric Foner, Editor

PENGUIN BOOKS

Overleaf: *Taino Indians panning for gold, using Spanish tools.*

PENGUIN BOOKS
Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.
Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M4P 2Y3 (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)
Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)
Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124,
Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)
Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India
Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632, New Zealand
(a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

First published in the United States of America by Viking Penguin,
a member of Penguin Putnam Inc. 2001
Published in Penguin Books 2002

38 39 40 41 42

Copyright © Alan Taylor, 2001
All rights reserved

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS: James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota: title page; Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.: p. 3; from Rhys Isaac's *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), courtesy of the University of North Carolina Press (Chapel Hill): p. 138, right and left; American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass., courtesy of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (Williamsburg, Va.): p. 222; Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library: p. 388. All others courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

Map illustrations by Jeffrey Ward

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS HAS CATALOGED THE HARDCOVER EDITION AS FOLLOWS:
Taylor, Alan, 1955–
American colonies / Alan Taylor ; Eric Foner, editor.
p. cm.—(The Penguin history of the United States ; 1)
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-670-87282-2 (hc.)
ISBN 978-0-14-200210-0 (pbk.)
1. United States—History—Colonial period, ca. 1600–1775.
I. Foner, Eric. II. Title. III. Series.
E188 .T35 2001
973.2—dc21 2001017552

Printed in the United States of America
Set in Janson
Designed by Helene Berinsky

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

The scanning, uploading and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

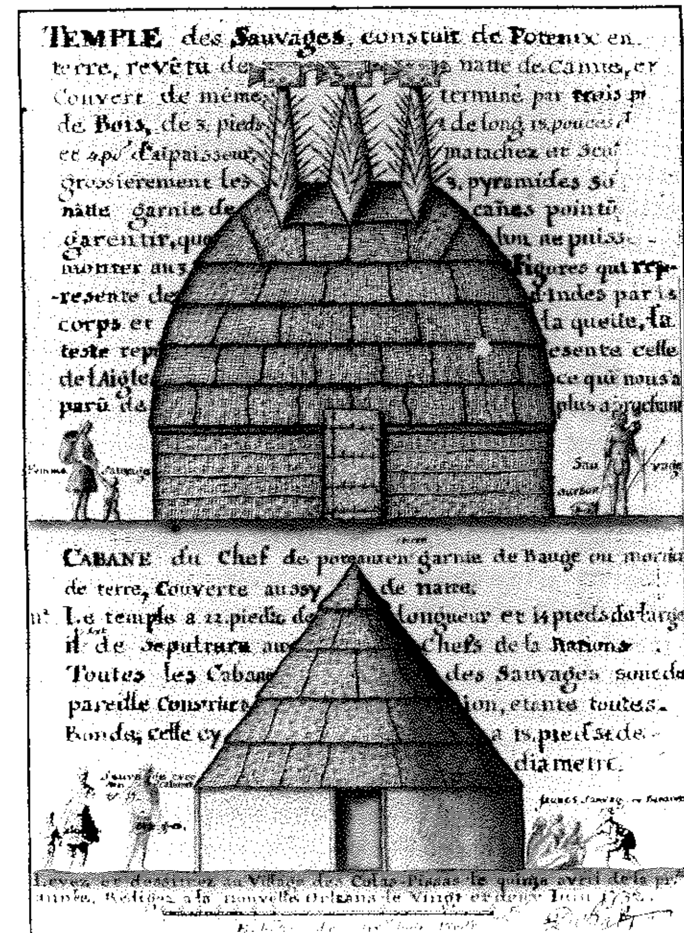
For Emily

1

Natives

—★—

13,000 B.C.–A.D. 1492



Temple and cabin of the chief of the Acolapissa, 1732, by Alexandre de Batz. In the lower Mississippi Valley, in the early eighteenth century, French colonizers found vestiges of the Mississippian culture featuring powerful priest-chiefs and elaborately decorated temples.

SCHOLARS USED TO THINK of Native American cultures as relatively static, unchanging for centuries until encountered and overwhelmed by the European invaders after 1492. Those scholars assumed that the descriptions of Indian cultures by early explorers could be read backward to imagine their predecessors from centuries past. With the help of recent archaeology and anthropology, we can now see that the explorers encountered a complex array of diverse peoples in the midst of profound change. Far from being an immutable people, the Indians had a complicated and dynamic history in America long before 1492.

Because so much remains controversial about native origins and so many new discoveries are daily made, all of the statements in this chapter are highly speculative and the dates are approximations. The archaeological evidence is fragmentary and limited, suggesting multiple possibilities. In general, I have favored the more cautious interpretations advanced by the debating archaeologists. And we should bear in mind that many contemporary native peoples entirely reject the scholarly explanations for their origins, preferring instead their own traditions that they emerged in the Americas and so literally belong to this land.

Writing about pre-Columbian America is also fraught with controversy because we often enlist ancient natives in contemporary debates over our own social and environmental problems. To highlight the social inequities and environmental degradation of our own society, some romantics depict the pre-1492 Americans as ecological and social saints living in perfect harmony with one another and with their nature. To refute that critique, more conservative intellectuals eagerly point out every example of native violence, human sacrifice, and environmental waste. By generalizing from such examples, the conservatives revive the mythology of the European colonizers: that Indians were warlike savages with a primitive culture that deserved conquest and transformation. Often the debate deteriorates into a competition over who was innately worse: the Indian or the European. In fact, it would be difficult (and pointless) to make the case that either the Indians or the Europeans of the early modern era were by nature or culture more violent and "cruel" than the other. Warfare and the ritual torture and execution of enemies were commonplace in both native America and early modern Europe.

Without pegging Europeans as innately more cruel and violent, we should recognize their superior power to inflict misery. By 1492 they had developed a greater technological and organizational capacity to conduct prolonged wars far from home. They also possessed imperial rivalries and religious ideologies that drove them outward across the world's oceans in search of new lands and peoples to conquer. Superior means enabled, and ideological imperatives obliged, Europeans to cross the Atlantic and invade North America after 1492. In the process, the newcomers escalated the bloodshed in the Americas to a level unprecedented in the native past.

And although Indians lacked the perfection of environmental saints, they did possess a culture that demanded less of their nature than did the Europeans of the early modern era. Almost all early explorers and colonizers marveled at the natural abundance they found in the Americas, a biodiversity at odds with the deforestation and extinctions that the Europeans had already wrought in most of their own continent. Colonization transformed the North American environment, which had already experienced more modest changes initiated by the native occupation.

MIGRATION

With the exception of frozen and isolated Antarctica, North and South America were the last continents occupied by people. All of the human fossils found in the Americas are almost certainly less than fifteen thousand years old and belong to the biologically modern form. Dental, genetic, and linguistic analysis reveals that most contemporary Native Americans are remarkably homogeneous and probably descend from a few hundred ancestors who came to North America within fifteen thousand years of the present (with the exception of the later-arriving Athabascan, Inuit, and Aleut peoples).

Most scholars believe that the first Americans migrated from Siberia in northeast Asia. Genetic and skeletal (especially dental) evidence suggests special affinities between Native Americans and the peoples of Siberia. And the proximity of Siberia to Alaska offers the readiest passage between the Old and the New World, indeed the only practicable route for peoples without the marine technology to traverse the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean.

About fifteen thousand years ago the inhabitants of Siberia lived in many small bands that ranged far and wide in pursuit of the roaming and grazing herds of large and meaty (but dangerous) mammals, especially mammoths, musk oxen, and woolly rhinoceroses. It was a hard, cold, and generally short life in which hunger alternated with the episodic binges of a big kill. Because the people had to remain on the move (on foot) in pursuit of the herds, they could not develop permanent villages and did not accumulate heavy possessions.

In their pursuit of the herds, some hunting bands passed into what is now North America. Today the oceanic Bering Strait separates Siberia from Alaska. But between about twenty-five thousand and twelve thousand years ago, a colder global climate—an Ice Age—locked up more of the world's water in polar icecaps, which spread southward as immense glaciers, covering the northern third of North America. The enlarged icecaps lowered the ocean levels by as much as 360 feet, creating a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska.

Of course, the first people who trekked into Alaska had no notion that they were discovering and colonizing a new continent, nor that they were crossing a land bridge that would subsequently vanish beneath the rising

Pacific Ocean when the global climate warmed. The newcomers naturally regarded the flat, gently undulating, cold, and arid grassland as simply an extension of their home.

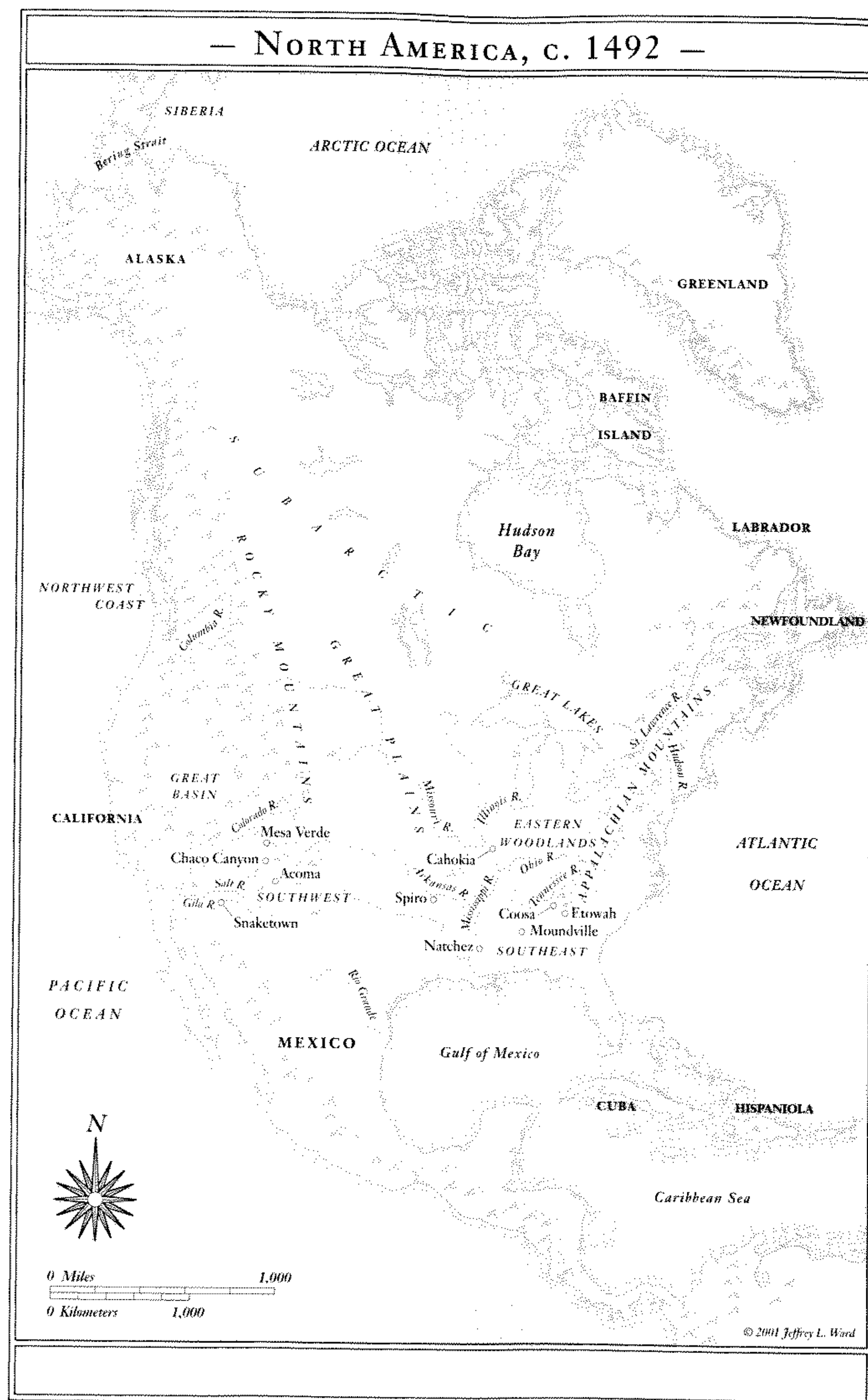
The period between fifteen thousand and twelve thousand years ago was an ideal time for a crossing into North America, because the global climate was slowly warming and the glaciers were in gradual retreat, sufficiently so to permit an easier passage into the continent but not yet so far as entirely to refill the Bering Strait with water. By about ten thousand years ago the glacial ice had retreated to approximately its present limits in the arctic, and the climate and sea levels stabilized close to their modern configurations. As the icecap receded over the centuries, the migrants found it easier to spread southward and eastward into North America and beyond. Remarkably similar archaeological sites of human encampments suddenly became common about twelve thousand to ten thousand years ago in distant places, from California to Pennsylvania and Florida.

As the land bridge submerged, migration from Siberia became more difficult—but not impossible for people possessing small boats made from animal skins stretched over a wooden framework. At its narrowest, the Bering Strait is only three miles wide. Contemporary Native Americans who speak an Athabascan language descend from a second pulse of emigrants, who arrived about ten thousand to eight thousand years ago. Settling first in the subarctic of Alaska and northwestern Canada, some Athabascan bands gradually worked their way down the Rocky Mountains, reaching the American southwest about six hundred years ago. These people later became known as the Navajo and Apache.

A third surge of colonization began about five thousand years ago and featured the ancestors of the Inuit (or "Eskimos") and Aleut. Skilled boat builders, they specialized in the hunting of sea mammals—walruses, seals, and whales. The Aleut settled the Aleutian islands southwest of Alaska, while their Inuit cousins gradually expanded eastward along the Arctic coasts of northern Alaska and Canada, reaching Labrador and Greenland by about twenty-five hundred years ago.

PALEO AND ARCHAIC AMERICA

We do not know what the people in the first pulse of migration named themselves, but scholars call them the Paleo-Indians. As in their Siberian past, the Paleo-Indians lived by hunting and gathering in small bands of about fifteen to fifty individuals: the optimum size for far-ranging travel in pursuit of animals as well as for cooperation in the hunt and butchering. Their basic weapon and tool was a spear with a sharp, flaked-stone point (usually flint) bound tightly to a wooden shaft. Most of their archaeological sites were temporary encampments near perennial springs, waterholes, and river



— NORTH AMERICA, c. 1492 —

crossings—places where big game came to drink or to pass. After consuming a kill, they moved on in pursuit of another herd.

At first, the Paleo-Indians primarily found in North America a vast, cool grassland that sustained large herds of slow-moving herbivores initially inexperienced in defending themselves against a predator as cunning, numerous, and cooperative as humans. The beasts included immense mammoths, mastodons, bison, horses, and camels, as well as caribou, moose, and deer. The Paleo-Indians found beavers as big as bears: seven feet long. The giant bison had horns spanning six feet, and the mammoths stood twelve feet high and could weigh ten tons, nearly as big as their modern relatives, the elephants. The Paleo-Indians truly experienced the discovery and occupation of a vast new domain of "free land": free from other humans and abounding with plant and animal life. After centuries of subarctic hardship and recurrent hunger, the first Americans had found the hunters' Eden.

But no Eden lasts for long. An abundant diet permitted an explosive population growth, which, in turn, pressed against local supplies of plants and animals. As bands grew too large for a locale to sustain, they subdivided, with new bands hiving off in pursuit of more distant animal herds. By about nine thousand years ago, people could be found from Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America, a distance of some eight thousand miles.

Through some combination of climatic change and the spread of highly skilled hunters, almost all of the largest mammals rapidly died out in the Americas. The extinctions comprised two-thirds of all New World species that weighed more than one hundred pounds at maturity—including the giant beaver, giant ground sloth, mammoth, mastodon, and horses and camels. It is ironic that horses and camels first evolved in North America and migrated westward into Asia, where they were eventually domesticated, while those that remained in the Americas became extinct. The giant bison died out, leaving its smaller cousin, the buffalo, as the largest herbivore on the Great Plains. Of the old, shaggy great beasts, only the musk oxen survived and only in the more inaccessible reaches of the arctic.

At the same time that the largest mammals became extinct, the environment became more diverse. Over the generations, the global warming gradually shrank the grasslands and expanded the forests. The revival of complex forest environments expanded the range of plant and small animal species that could be gathered for food.

The changing climate and the demise of the mega-animals induced the nomadic bands to pursue more diversified strategies to tap a broader range of food sources. The natives had to learn their local environments more intimately to harvest shellfish, fish, birds, nuts, seeds, berries, and tubers. The Indians obtained more of their diet from fishing as they developed nets, traps, and bone hooks. Their hunting evolved into the patient and prolonged tracking of more elusive mammals, especially deer, pronghorn antelope, moose, elk, and caribou. Beginning about nine thousand years ago the Indians adjusted to their smaller, fleeter prey by developing the *atlatl*—a spear thrower that provided increased thrust, velocity, and distance.

American archaeologists distinguish the peoples leading this more complex and more locally framed way of life between about nine thousand and three thousand years ago as "Archaic" to distinguish them from their "Paleo-Indian" ancestors. As the Archaic Indians exploited a broader array of food sources, they more than compensated for the loss of the great mammals. Obtaining more to eat, more reliably, they resumed their population growth. The more local and eclectic Archaic way of life could sustain about ten times as many people on a given territory as could the Paleolithic predation on herds of great beasts. From a late Paleolithic level of about 100,000 people, North America's population probably grew to one million by the end of the Archaic period. Obliged to change by the potentially disastrous demise of the megafauna, native peoples innovated to develop a more efficient and productive relationship with their diverse environments.

In the temperate climes, people began to live for longer periods in semipermanent villages located beside rivers and lakes or along seacoasts, at places where fish and birds and shellfish and wild food plants were most abundant. They also settled in larger groups within smaller territories. Each band developed a seasonal round of activity and movement within a more defined territory, harvesting those plants and animals as they became abundant at different seasons. For example, in the southwest during the summer and fall the people dispersed to hunt rabbits, deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and antelope. The onset of winter with its cold rains led them to gather in larger groups in caves and rock shelters in the sides of canyons, where they harvested prickly pear and piñon nuts. In the spring, they scattered again in pursuit of roots and berries and game.

Archaic Indians also began to modify the environment to increase the yields of plants and animals that sustained them. In particular, they set annual fires to reduce small trees and encourage edge environments that, by providing more browse and better grazing, promoted a larger deer herd for the people to hunt. In some places the Indians weeded out inedible plants to encourage clusters of edible plants such as wild onions, sunflowers, and marsh elder. These practices brought a people to the verge of horticulture.

Gender structured work roles: men were responsible for fishing and hunting while women harvested and prepared wild plants. In general, men's activities entailed wide-ranging travel and the endurance of greater exposure and danger, while women's activities kept them close to the village, where they bore and raised children. We can intuit this from burials, for the dead were interred with the tools they needed in the afterlife: men with hunting, fishing, woodworking, and leatherworking tools; women with tools to dig and grind nuts and roots. Women probably gained in status as their gathering activities became more critical to their band's survival.

The Archaic way of life was a decentralizing phenomenon as many

far-flung peoples figured out how best to exploit the mix of resources peculiar to their locale. The immense continent of North America offered extraordinary climatic and environmental diversity. Peoples living along the Atlantic or Pacific coasts, on the Great Plains, in the Rocky Mountains, in the interior deserts, on the edges of the Canadian arctic, or in temperate forests had to pursue different strategies for survival, had to adapt to different seasonal cycles affecting distinctive sets of plants and animals.

As the Archaic Indian bands proliferated and specialized in harvesting the particular local resources, they became distinguished culturally, developing different languages, rituals, mythic stories, kinship systems, and survival strategies. The native peoples of North America spoke at least 375 distinct languages by 1492. The process of cultural differentiation proceeded most elaborately and rapidly in the Pacific northwest and northern California, where the general abundance and the subdivision into many localized microenvironments led to the development of some five hundred culturally diverse communities speaking nearly fifty distinct languages.

Cultural differentiation did not mean cultural isolation. Trade networks developed over very long distances. Archaeologists have found that some relatively small and highly valued objects could pass hundreds and even thousands of miles through multiple bands. At Archaic sites in the midwest or Great Basin, archaeologists find marine shells from the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; on the coasts they uncover copper from the Great Lakes and obsidian from the Rocky Mountains. Ideas and innovations traveled along with these objects so that the trading peoples influenced one another over long distances.

HORTICULTURE

Through trial and error, over many generations, horticulture evolved from the practices of gathering wild plants, rather than by sudden and conscious invention. As some Indian bands protected, watered, and harvested productive patches of wild plants with edible seeds, they also gradually developed hybrids of increasing reliability and productivity. For example, wild maize has a single inch-long ear with fifty tiny kernels. By 1500 B.C., Indians in central Mexico had learned how to cross maize—"Indian corn"—with other wild grasses to create hybrids with multiple ears, protective husks, and cobs with multiple rows of kernels.

The Indians of central Mexico pioneered the three great crops of North American horticulture: maize, squashes, and beans. As these domesticated plants became more important in their diet, the peoples of central Mexico devoted less time to hunting, gathering, and fishing. Indeed, the expansion of cleared fields and the growth of the human population reduced the habitat for wildlife. By expanding the food supply, horticulture permitted a renewed surge in the human population and a more sedentary life in larger and more permanent villages. Indeed, maize requires permanence, for unless carefully tended, guarded, and watered through its growing season, the crop will succumb to pests, weeds, and drought. As people became dependent on corn, they had to live most of the year in villages near their cultivated fields. The new horticulture also promoted economic differentiation and social stratification as the food surplus enabled some people to specialize as craftsmen, merchants, priests, and rulers.

But the new dependence on horticulture also had negative consequences. The crops were vulnerable to catastrophic collapse from a prolonged drought or infestations of insects and blights. Horticulture also demanded more sustained and repetitive work than did the hunting-and-gathering life, in which temporary bursts of exertion alternated with longer stretches of rest. And a horticultural diet that relies too heavily on one plant, particularly maize, is not as healthy as the diverse diet of hunter-gatherers. The skeletons of early farmers reveal a want of sufficient salt or protein, episodes of early childhood malnutrition, and an overall loss of stature. Moreover, the denser populations of horticultural villages facilitated the spread of communicable diseases, principally tuberculosis, which was less common among dispersed hunter-gatherers.

Consequently, native peoples were often slow to adopt Mesoamerican horticulture. By about 1500 B.C., peoples in the American southwest and midwest had begun to cultivate some maize and squash, but only as a minor supplement to their hunting and gathering. Not until about 500 B.C. did native peoples north of the Rio Grande develop strains of maize better suited to their cooler climate and shorter growing season. Thereafter, cultivation spread more rapidly. Between about A.D. 700 and 1200, maize, beans, and squash became fundamental to the native diet in the American southwest, midwest, and southeast and the more temperate portions of the northeast.

In Mexico and the American southwest, where maize cultivation was most advanced, Indian men reduced their hunting and became the primary cultivators. In those relatively arid regions, maize fields required the laborious construction and maintenance of extensive irrigation ponds, dams, and ditches. In the more humid stretches of central and eastern North America, maize cultivation arrived relatively late and required less labor. Consequently, there the native peoples regarded horticulture as an extension of gathering, which was a female responsibility, while the men remained preoccupied with hunting and fishing.

Horticulture never spread universally among the Indians. Some lived where the growing season was too short: in the vast arctic and subarctic regions of Alaska and Canada or in the high elevations of the Rockies and Sierra Nevada. Or they dwelled where there was too little water: in the western Great Plains and in most of the Great Basin between the Rockies and Sierra Nevada. Where either the growing season was too short or water too

scant, the inhabitants continued to live in small, mobile, highly dispersed, and relatively egalitarian groups. Rather than horticulture, the most significant development for these people was their adoption of the bow and arrow after about A.D. 500.

Natives also did not develop horticulture in the temperate and humid coastal zone of California and the Pacific northwest, despite its sufficient growing seasons and abundant water. Along the Pacific coast, the hunting-gathering-fishing complex was so productive that the native peoples did not feel the pressures that elsewhere led to horticulture. In California an abundance of acorns and other edible wild plants supported an especially large population. Similarly, in the mild and rainy Pacific northwest, the people lived plentifully on fish (especially salmon) and sea mammals. Endowed with a bountiful diet and leisure time, the Indians of the northwestern raincoast could develop and sustain elaborate rituals, art, and status hierarchies without developing horticulture.

HOHOKAM AND ANASAZI

Between about A.D. 300 and 1100 two especially complex and populous cultures emerged in the American southwest: the Hohokam and the Anasazi. The names are scholarly conventions, for we do not know what those peoples called themselves. "Hohokam" and "Anasazi" signify broad cultural similarities rather than linguistic and political unity. Neither constituted a nation-state, to say nothing of an empire. Instead, both cultures consisted of several linguistic groups and many politically independent villages or towns (later called *pueblos* by the Spanish). Neither the Anasazi nor the Hohokam had beasts of burden (other than dogs), developed a system of writing, or employed the wheel. Nonetheless, both built substantial stone and adobe towns directed by a social hierarchy headed by men who combined the roles of chief and priest.

The Anasazi and Hohokam annually conducted public rituals meant to sustain the harmony and productivity of their world. Far from taking harmony and abundance for granted, they regarded constant ritual exertion as essential to prevent nature's collapse into chaos. Their arid land of limited resources and competing villages afforded good cause for their existential anxiety.

Both the Anasazi and the Hohokam manifested, to varying degrees, the influence of central Mexico, the preeminent cultural hearth of the continent. In trade with central Mexico, they exchanged turquoise stones for parrots, copper bells, and maize seed. In addition to transmitting their food crops, Mesoamericans taught the Hohokam and Anasazi how to cultivate cotton and to weave cloth. The largest Hohokam villages constructed ball courts and platform temple mounds resembling those of central Mexican cities.

In the arid southwest, horticulture required elaborate systems of dams, reservoirs, and ditches to catch, retain, and channel water to irrigate the plants. In the Gila River and Salt River valleys of southern Arizona, the Hohokam built and maintained over five hundred miles of irrigation canals to water thousands of acres devoted to maize, beans, and squash. To the north, the Anasazi occupied upland canyons that captured more moisture in winter than did the low desert. The Anasazi irrigation system caught and retained winter's rainwater on the mesa tops for spring and summer release via diversion channels to low-lying fields beside the intermittent streambeds, where the people cultivated their crops.

The irrigation works demanded extensive, coordinated labor to build and maintain, while the abundant crops enabled many people to live clustered together. The preeminent Hohokam pueblo, known as Snaketown, had about a thousand residents living in adobe row houses, some of them two and three stories tall. The Anasazi constructed even larger, rectangular pueblos of mortared sandstone blocks roofed with rafters and adobe tile. The largest pueblo, at Chaco Canyon, required thirty thousand tons of sandstone blocks, stood four stories tall, and contained at least 650 rooms.

During the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, both the Hohokam and the Anasazi experienced severe crises that began in environmental degradation associated with local overpopulation and an excessive reliance on maize. Although highly productive, corn rapidly depletes the soil of nutrients, especially nitrogen. Repeated crops in the same fields led to diminishing yields. In the southwest, between 1130 and 1190, an especially prolonged period of drought years exacerbated the subsistence crisis, setting off a chain reaction of crop failure, malnutrition, and violent feuds.

The Hohokam apparently concluded that their leaders could no longer win favor from the spirits of the plants and the rain. The hard work of supporting their chiefs and priests and maintaining the irrigation systems or the earthworks came to seem futile. During the thirteenth century, most of the Hohokam abandoned their towns and dispersed into the arid hinterland, where they reverted to a mobile strategy of hunting and gathering that shifted with the seasons. They harvested cholla, yucca, saguaro fruit, prickly pear, and mesquite pods, and they hunted for rabbit, deer, and pronghorn antelope. Sixteenth-century Spanish explorers found the probable descendants of the Hohokam divided into many small villages. They called themselves some variant of "O'odham," which simply means "the people," but the Spanish named them the Pima and the Papago. Some lived beside the rivers and maintained smaller-scale versions of the ancient irrigation system, but most lived in the hills.

Between 1150 and 1250, the Anasazi responded to their growing violence by shifting their pueblos to more defensible locations atop mesas, which they fortified. Skeletons from this period reveal a surge in violent death, mutilation, and perhaps ritual cannibalism. At the end of the thirteenth century,

most of the Anasazi abandoned their homeland and fled south and east, seeking locales with a more certain source of water and with soils not yet exhausted by corn. Some regrouped in western New Mexico and eastern Arizona to build the Acoma, Hopi, and Zuni pueblos. Founded in 1300, Acoma is probably the longest continuously inhabited community within the United States. Other Anasazi traveled still farther east to settle along the upper Rio Grande, which offered sufficient year-round water to sustain irrigation even in drought years. Later collectively called the Pueblo Indians by the Spanish, the Rio Grande peoples in fact belonged to dozens of autonomous villages, and they spoke at least seven different languages. Instead of "collapsing," the Anasazi culture *moved*, shifting into impressive new pueblos to the south and east of its former homeland. The oral traditions of the Pueblo, Zuni, Hopi, and Acoma agree that their ancestors were uprooted from old homes by a combination of drought, famine, disease, and violence.

MOUND BUILDERS

In contrast to the arid American southwest, the Mississippi watershed enjoys a humid and temperate climate. The great river collects the waters of wide-ranging tributaries, including the Tennesee, Cumberland, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas, and Red rivers, to drain an area of nearly 1.25 million square miles. Unlike the Hohokam and Anasazi, the Mississippi people did not need irrigation systems to sustain horticulture. Indeed, the mild and moist conditions probably delayed the advent of horticulture by sustaining the inhabitants with an abundance of wild plants and animals. Beginning about 2000 B.C., Mississippi Valley farmers experimented with the cultivation of marsh elder, goosefoot, sunflowers, and gourds. But they continued to depend upon hunting, fishing, and gathering for most of their diet until about A.D. 800, when they adopted the trinity of maize, beans, and squash. The broad floodplains of the Mississippi Valley proved ideal for the new horticulture: well-watered, well-drained soils easily tilled with stone hoes and replenished with fertile silt by annual spring floods. The highly productive new horticulture permitted the population to quadruple, as the Mississippi Valley became the most densely settled region north of central Mexico.

Drawing upon Mesoamerican precedents, the Mississippian peoples built substantial towns around central plazas that featured earthen pyramids topped by wooden temples that doubled as the residences of chiefs. Like the people of central Mexico, the Mississippians regarded the sun as their principal deity, responsible for the crops that sustained their survival; they considered their chiefs as quasi-sacred beings related to the sun; and they practiced human sacrifice. When a chief died, his wives and servants were killed for burial beside him, as companions for the afterlife.

Paying tribute in labor and produce, common people erected the earthworks, built the towns, and sustained a local chief. In turn, the local chiefs usually paid tribute to a paramount chief, who dwelled on top of the largest pyramid in the region's largest town.

The great valley was a vibrant and diverse landscape of paramount and local chiefdoms, of rising and falling power, never stable and never united. There was a "cycling" process by which certain towns emerged for a century or two to dominate their region only to decline in favor of a rival chiefdom. The chiefdoms conducted chronic warfare. Burials reveal skeletons scarred with battle wounds; many towns were fortified with wooden palisades, and their art often celebrated victorious warriors displaying the skulls, scalps, and corpses of their victims. Of course, none of this rendered them more warlike than their contemporaries elsewhere in the world; European graves, cities, and art of the same period ("the Middle Ages") also displayed the prominence of war and the honors bestowed upon victors.

The largest, wealthiest, and most complex of the political and ceremonial centers was at a place now called Cahokia, located near the Mississippi River in Illinois just east of St. Louis. Cahokia arose in the midst of a broad and fertile floodplain, extending over about 350 square miles. In addition to hosting cornfields, the floodplain featured dozens of oxbow lakes and marshes, rich in fish and waterfowl. Located near the junctures of the Missouri, Tennesee, and Ohio rivers with the Mississippi, Cahokia could also dominate both north-south and east-west trade in precious shells and stones.

Developed between A.D. 900 and 1100, Cahokia and its immediate suburbs covered about six square miles and had a population of at least ten thousand (some estimates run as high as forty thousand). Even at the smallest calculation, Cahokia ranked as the greatest Indian community north of Mexico. At its peak, Cahokia contained about one hundred earthen temple and burial mounds as well as hundreds of thatched houses for commoners. The city was surrounded by a stockade, a wall of large posts two miles in circumference with a watchtower every seventy feet. Outside the palisade stood a precise circle 410 feet in diameter, featuring forty-eight large posts. Called "Woodhenge" by archaeologists, this was a calendrical device to determine the solstices and equinoxes—apparently to guide the ritual cycle of the city.

Cahokia's greatest monument was an immense earthen pyramid containing over 800,000 cubic yards of earth, covering sixteen acres, and rising 110 feet high. The Cahokia pyramid was the third-largest in North America, ranking behind two in central Mexico. The flat top bore a wooden temple with a thatched roof. The temple contained a sacred fire representing the sun, and it housed the chief, along with his family and servants. The chief served as the town's preeminent priest, responsible for conducting rituals to maintain a spiritual harmony between the people and their cosmos. The inhabitants sought a supernatural security from catastrophic variations in their climate, especially droughts and crop blights. Endowed with great structures,

Cahokia appeared as a center of great spiritual and temporal power that must be honored and sustained.

During the twelfth century, however, Cahokia began to decline in population and power, and it was abandoned in the middle of the thirteenth century—at the same time that the Anasazi and Hohokam experienced their crises. As in the southwest, the archaeological evidence suggests that environmental strains initiated the demise of Cahokia. The growing population gradually depleted the local resources, initiating a destructive cycle of malnutrition, disease, demoralization, and infighting. Too many hunters killed the nearby wild animals faster than they could reproduce, reducing animal protein in the people's diet, which led to an unhealthy overreliance on maize. The people also chopped down most of the nearby forest, exhausting the wood needed for fires and to repair their homes and the defensive stockade. Urban concentration also accumulated the wastes that bred the pathogens of some endemic diseases. The environmental strains became exacerbated into a severe crisis in those years when unusually hot and dry summers withered the crops. As the people's material circumstances decayed, they doubted the efficacy of the paramount chief in securing favor from the sun. Doubts encouraged dissension and rebellion, especially by the subordinated villages on Cahokia's periphery. In the elaborate and strengthened stockade there is evidence of growing external resistance. Burials throughout the upper midwest also indicate a greater frequency of violent death.

Although in decline around Cahokia, Missisippian culture remained vibrant in substantial southern towns, including Moundville in Alabama, Etowah in Georgia, and Spiro in eastern Oklahoma, which surged in size and apparent power after Cahokia collapsed. The southern Mississippian culture survived for description by the chroniclers attached to a Spanish expedition commanded by Hernando de Soto in the years 1540–42. They were impressed by the numbers of the Indians, the extent of their maize fields, the quantities in their storehouses, the dignity and power of their chiefs, and their disciplined warriors. From the top of one town's temple mound the Spanish could usually see the palisades and mounds of several neighboring towns. "That country is populous and abundant," concluded a Spaniard.

Soto foolishly claimed that he could command the sun and summoned a paramount chief to his camp. The chief contemptuously replied:

> As to what you say of your being the son of the Sun, if you will cause him to dry up the great river, I will believe you: as to the rest, it is not my custom to visit any one, but rather all, of whom I have ever heard, have come to visit me, to serve and obey me, and pay me tribute, either voluntarily or by force. If you desire to see me, come where I am; if for peace, I will receive you with special goodwill; if for war, I will await you in my town; but neither for you, nor for any man, will I set back one foot.

A Mississippian chief could be as imperious as any European warlord. But the arrival of the Europeans, bent on conquest and bearing disease pathogens, introduced a radical and catastrophic acceleration of change. Within a century, European diseases, supplemented by European violence, killed most of the Mississippian peoples and transformed the world of the survivors.

BELIEFS

The Anasazi, Hohokam, and northern Mississippians all put excessive pressure on their local environments, leading to increased violence and the collapse or relocation of their largest communities. Although their experiences contradict the romantic myth of the Indian as environmental saint, it would be equally misleading to depict *all* natives as just as environmentally destructive as their European contemporaries. In their urban concentrations and dependence on maize, the Anasazi, the Hohokam, and the Mississippians were conspicuous exceptions to the general pattern in native America. North of central Mexico, most native peoples lived in smaller, more dispersed, and more mobile bands that placed less of a burden on their local nature. And even the urbanized peoples produced less long-term, accumulative damage than did their European contemporaries. The urban centers tended to collapse within two centuries of their peak, which obliged their inhabitants either to relocate or to revert to a more decentralized and less hierarchical mode of life, which allowed the recovery of wild plants, animals, and soils. Because native peoples more promptly felt the negative consequences of their local abuse of nature (relative to Europeans), they more quickly shifted to alternative environmental strategies.

Natives could and did damage their local environments, but they certainly did less enduring harm than the colonizers who displaced them. By all accounts, the nature found by European explorers was far more diverse and abundant in plants and animals than the nature they had left behind in their Old World. Having depleted the forests and wildlife of Europe, the colonizers came to do the same in their New World.

When the Europeans invaded, the native North Americans painfully discovered their profound technological and epidemiological disadvantages. They lacked the steel weapons and armor and the gunpowder that endowed the invaders with military advantage. Native peoples also could not match the wind or water mills that facilitated the processing of wood and grain. Lacking horses and oxen, native North Americans knew the wheel only in Mesoamerica as a toy. For maritime navigation, the natives possessed only large canoes and rafts incapable of crossing an open ocean in safety. Their lone domesticated mammal was the dog, which provided far less protein and less motive power than the cattle and horses of the Europeans. Only the

elites in parts of Mesoamerica possessed the systems of writing that facilitated long-distance communication and record-keeping. Consequently, in the North America of 1492, only the Aztecs of Mexico constituted an imperial power capable of governing multiple cities and their peoples by command. In addition, no Native Americans possessed an ideology that impelled them far beyond their known world in search of new lands and peoples to conquer and to transform. Finally, compared with Europeans, the natives of America carried a more limited and less deadly array of pathogenic microbes.

By contrast, the Europeans of 1492 were the heirs to an older and more complex array of domesticated plants and animals developed about nine thousand years ago at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The European mode of agriculture featured domesticated mammals—sheep, pigs, cattle, and horses—endowing their owners with more fertilizer, mobility, motive power, animal protein, and shared disease microbes. Building on a long head start and the power of domesticated mammals, the Europeans had, over the centuries, developed expansionist ambitions, systems of written records and communication, the maritime and military technology that permitted global exploration and conquest, and (unwittingly) a deadly array of diseases to which they enjoyed partial immunities. Lacking those peculiar ambitions, technologies, diseases, and domesticants, the Indians did not expand across the Atlantic to discover and conquer Europe.

The technological differences reflected contrasting spiritual commitments. Compared with Europeans, Indians possessed a more complex understanding of the interdependent relationship between the natural and supernatural. Where Europeans believed that humanity had a divine duty and an unchecked power to dominate nature, North American Indians believed that they lived within a contentious world of spiritual power that sometimes demanded human restraint and at other moments offered opportunities for exploitation.

North American natives subscribed to "animism": a conviction that the supernatural was a complex and diverse web of power woven into every part of the natural world. Indeed, Indians made no distinction between the natural and the supernatural. In their minds, spiritual power was neither singular nor transcendent, but diverse and ubiquitous. Their world was filled with an almost infinite variety of beings, each possessing some varying measure of power. All living things belonged to a complex matrix that was simultaneously spiritual and material. Indeed, spirit power could be found in every plant, animal, rock, wind, cloud, and body of water—but in greater concentration in some than others. This power pulsated, ebbing and flowing from interaction with every other being—including the ritual magic practiced by humans bent on exploiting their nature. If properly approached and flattered (or tricked), the spirit "keepers" of animals or plants could help people find, catch, and kill what they needed.

Because of their animistic convictions, Indians lived very differently

within their nature than Europeans did within theirs. Natives believed that humans lived inside, rather than apart from, that web of the natural and supernatural. They conceived of their actions with all other-than-human beings as essentially social, as involving creatures more like than unlike themselves. Indeed, in their myths and dreams, people and the other-than-human could metamorphose into one another. As in all aspects of native life, the fundamental principle in harvesting nature was the pursuit of reciprocity. People felt justified in claiming a share in the other life around them, but felt obligated to reciprocate by paying ritual honor and by minimizing waste.

Indians understood that humans could live only by killing fish and animals and by clearing trees for fields, but they had to proceed cautiously. Natives usually showed restraint, not because they were ecologically minded in the twentieth-century sense, but because spirits, who could harm people, lurked in the animals and plants. A healthy fear of the spirits limited how the Indians dealt with other forms of life, lest they reap some supernatural counterattack. Offended spirits might hide away the animals or the fish, afflict the corn crop, or churn up a devastating windstorm. Any success in hunting, fishing, or cultivating had to be accepted with humility, in recognition that the fruits of nature were provisional gifts from temperamental spirits.

Indian animism should not be romantically distorted into a New Age creed of stable harmony. In fact, the natives regarded the spiritual world as volatile and full of tension, danger, and uncertainty. To survive and prosper, people had to live warily and opportunistically. Engaged in an always difficult balancing act, humans had to discern when they could trick and manipulate the spirits and when they should soothe and mollify them. Sometimes people could take fish or kill game with exuberance; more often they had to limit their take. The logic of restraint was animist rather than ecological—but that restraint tended to preserve a nature that sustained most native communities over many generations.

Dreams and visions enabled native people to communicate with the spirits to enlist their aid in hunting, gathering, cultivating, and war. Natives regarded the nocturnal dreamworld as fundamentally more real and powerful than their waking hours. They also provoked visions by prolonged fasting and isolation (sometimes aided by ingesting psychotropic plants). The most adept dreamers and visionaries became shamans, who acted as intermediaries between people and the other-than-human beings. Shamans conducted rituals to promote the hunt, secure the crops, and protect their warriors. Shamans could heal or inflict illness, and could predict, and sometimes magically influence, the future. But even the most skilled shaman often failed in the complex contests to influence, lull, and propitiate spirit beings. Only constant effort and varying tactics could preserve the reciprocities between people and other life.

An animist perspective discouraged the sort of mechanistic development practiced by Europeans. Lacking domesticated animals and metal tools and

weapons, the Indians seemed a primitive people to the Europeans. The natives, however, regarded themselves as more intelligent and resourceful than the Europeans. Animism both derived from and encouraged the distinctive forms of perception and ingenuity demanded by hunting and gathering—practices essential to almost all native peoples, even those who also cultivated domesticated plants. Native peoples keenly observed the diverse forms of edible or healing life in the forest and waters, and they mastered the best times and techniques for finding and harvesting wild plants and animals. Because Europeans lacked these skills and that knowledge, they struck the Indians as clumsy babes in the woods. From the native perspective, it seemed that the colonizers had exhausted their intelligence in making their metal and cloth goods. Preoccupied with dead matter, they appeared insensitive to living nature.

A few colonizers recognized that native intelligence and creativity ran in different channels. William Wood concluded that the natives were "by nature admirably ingenious." Another seventeenth-century New Englander, Thomas Morton, decided, "The Salvages have the sence of seeing so farre beyond any of our Nation, that one would almost believe they had intelligence of the Devill."

Even a relatively sympathetic observer like Morton could not accept native beliefs on their own terms. Instead, Europeans forced animism into their polarity between the divine and the diabolical. They generally regarded the Indians' beliefs as dictated by the devil and considered their shamans to be witches, possessed of an evil power to inflict harm on other Indians but not on European Christians.

In contrast to the animism of the natives, the Europeans had begun conceptually to segregate the natural and the spiritual. Christianity fundamentally invests supernatural power in a single God located away in heaven, above and beyond the earth. Even the evil power of the devil and his minions was subordinate to God: allowed in the short term but ultimately doomed to destruction. Most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans continued to believe in supernatural intervention, both divine and diabolical, in human events. But they regarded the supernatural intervention as coming from without, rather than from within particular plants, animals, and places. Belief in a transcendent God enabled educated Europeans to disenchant the world, to treat it as purely material and its animals as without souls. Of course, many European peasants continued to merge old pagan beliefs in fairies and other nature spirits with their Christian notions. But such rustics exercised no intellectual, political, or economic power in the hierarchical societies of Europe and their colonial ventures.

The Christian alienation of spirit from nature rendered it supernaturally safe for Europeans to harvest all the resources that they wanted from nature, for they offended no spirits in doing so. In wild plants and animals, the colonizers simply saw potential commodities: items that could be harvested,

processed, and sold to make a profit. Indeed, European Christians insisted that humanity had a divine charge to dominate and exploit the natural world. In the first book of their Bible, God ordered people to "subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth." As a result, colonizers regarded as backward and impious any people, like the Indians, who left nature too little altered. By defaulting in their divine duty, such peoples forfeited their title to the earth. They could justly be conquered and dispossessed by Europeans who would exploit lands and animals to their fullest potential.

The "anthropocentric" implications of Christianity enabled western Europeans to develop the economic culture of capitalism (to varying degrees) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Spain, Portugal, and France were hybrid economic cultures in which capitalist enterprise remained inhibited by feudal traditions and especially powerful monarchs. By comparison, England and the Netherlands more quickly and more fully developed capitalist societies, in which the means of production—land, labor, and capital—were privately owned, available for sale, and devoted to harvesting or making commodities for sale in pursuit of profit. Although neither the Dutch nor the English had yet developed the mature form of capitalism characterized by industrial production and a propertyless proletariat, both nations had passed into that early stage known as mercantile capitalism. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Dutch and English merchant classes were constructing innovative combinations of land, labor, and capital meant to accumulate profit for yet further investment and production. Their ambitious new ventures included trading voyages to, and plantations within, the North American colonies.

Capitalist societies compel much more work from common people and extract far more energy and matter from nature than do the less ambitious economies of aboriginal peoples subscribing to animism. Capitalism demands ever greater production and innovation in a relentless drive for increased profits. Competitors who cannot keep up go bankrupt. Unless regulated, capitalism encourages individuals to harvest wealth from nature as quickly as possible.

Seventeenth-century capitalism already had its discontents. Although Christianity was compatible with the emergence of capitalism, that does not mean that they lacked tensions. Indeed, the materialism and individualism encouraged by capitalism profoundly troubled early modern clergymen. Catholic friars, as well as Protestant ministers, worried that the pursuit of wealth distracted people from attending to their proper goal: the salvation of their souls for an enduring afterlife in heaven. People were supposed to labor diligently at their worldly calling, yet never mistake its rewards as their ultimate purpose in life.

In the less hurried, more egalitarian, and less propertied ways of Indians, some critics saw an opportunity to score points against their own uneasy

culture. A French priest in Acadia noted of the Indians, "They are never in a hurry. Quite different from us, who can never do anything without hurry and worry; worry, I say, because our desire tyrannizes over us and banishes peace from our actions." Similarly, Thomas Morton, a fur trader in New England, observed: "These people lead the more happy & freer life, being voyde of care, which torments the minds of so many Christians. They are not delighted in baubles, but in useful things." He added, "If our beggars of England should with so much ease (as they) furnish themselves with foode, at all seasons, there would not be so many starved in the streets. Neither would so many gaoles be stuffed, or gallows furnished with poor wretches."

But neither the priest nor the trader deserted European society to embrace life among the natives. Both men remained fundamentally committed to the superiority of the Christian faith and the European economy. For all their criticism of European materialism, these critics insisted that natives must eventually forsake their own culture and accept that of their invaders. However astute, their critiques were the fleeting indulgence of men bent upon converting Indians or upon trading with them for profit.

By offering such moral criticism, however, Christians helped to preserve a capitalist society from consuming itself. Indeed, without some moral counterweight and some sense of a higher purpose, capitalist competition degenerates into a rapacious, violent kleptocracy. Without a God, the capitalist is simply a pirate, and markets collapse for want of a minimal trust between buyers and sellers. The seventeenth-century English minister Thomas Shepard aptly commented that self-interest was a "raging Sea which would overwhelm all if [it] have not bankes." Shepard did not wish to abolish self-interest, merely to strengthen its restraining banks. Christianity provided the banks that permitted capitalist enterprise to persist, prosper, and expand into the Americas.

2

Colonizers

1400–1800

The departure for Columbus's second voyage, with representations of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand on the shore of Iberia. Although a fanciful depiction of the ships, the image conveys the European mastery of the Atlantic and determination to colonize the Americas. An engraving from Caspar Plautius, Nova Typis Transacta Navigatio *(n.p., 1621).*

During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Europeans developed the maritime technology and imperial ambitions to explore and dominate the world's oceans. Long a barrier to Europeans, the Atlantic became their highway to distant lands and unknown peoples. Between 1450 and 1500, European mariners, in dozens of voyages, found the Americas and rounded Africa to cross the Indian Ocean to India and the East Indies. In the years 1519–22 the Spanish sailors of Ferdinand Magellan's voyage first circumnavigated the globe, confirming that the oceans formed an integrated system that European ships could probe. On distant coasts, the mariners established fortified outposts to dominate local trade, creating the first transoceanic global empires. It was an extraordinary and unprecedented burst of geographic understanding, daring, and enterprise.

As the Europeans expanded their geographic range, they also developed a combination of science, technology, and commerce that gave them growing mastery over what they found. The various advances fed upon one another as the mariners tested innovations in mathematics, astronomy, geology, medicine, and weaponry. And the distant discoveries brought new commercial riches to Europe: precious metals, sugar, tobacco, vital new foods such as maize and potatoes, and new sources of slave labor. By enriching Europe, the new resources financed further exploration and conquest.

The discovery and exploitation of the Americas and the route to Asia transformed Europe from a parochial backwater into the world's most dynamic and powerful continent. Europeans delighted in the sudden and dramatic change in their circumstances, perspective, and prospects. A sixteenth-century Italian physician marveled "that I was born in this century in which the whole world became known; whereas the ancients were familiar with but a little more than a third part of it." Perceptive Spaniards celebrated their new centrality in the world. During the 1560s, Tomás de Mercado commented that "previously, [the Spanish provinces of] Andalusia and Lusitania used to be at the very end of the world, but now, with the discovery of the Indies, they have become its center."

The first European explorers were stunned by the distinctive flora, fauna, and human cultures found in the Americas. In the West Indies, Christopher Columbus marveled, "All the trees were as different from ours as day from night, and so the fruits, the herbage, the rocks, and all things." Subsequent explorers recognized the obvious: that the Americas constituted a distinctive, hitherto unknown hemisphere. During the 1550s the explorer Jean de Léry reported that America was so "different from Europe, Asia and Africa in the living habits of its people, the forms of its animals, and, in general, in that which the earth produces, that it can well be called the new world."

But the differences began to diminish as soon as they were recognized. The invasion by European colonists, microbes, plants, and livestock eroded the biological and cultural distinctions formerly enforced by the Atlantic

Ocean. Newly connected, the two "worlds," old and new, became more alike in their natures, in their combinations of plants and animals. In 1528 the Spanish writer Hernán Pérez de Oliva explained that Columbus's voyages served "to unite the world and give to those strange lands the form of our own." American colonization wrought an environmental revolution unprecedented in pace, scale, and impact in the history of humanity.

The environmental revolution worked disproportionately in favor of the Europeans and to the detriment of the native peoples, who saw their numbers dwindle. Although never under the full control of the colonizers, the transformation enhanced their power by undermining the nature that indigenous communities depended upon. Colonization literally alienated the land from its native inhabitants. In particular, the colonizers accidentally introduced despised weeds, detested vermin, and deadly microbes. All three did far more damage to native peoples and their nature than to the colonists. While exporting their own blights, the European colonizers imported the most productive food plants developed by the Indians. The new crops fueled a population explosion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Part of that growth then flowed back across the Atlantic to resettle the Americas as European colonies.

EUROPE

The stunning expansion of European power, wealth, and knowledge would have seemed improbable in 1400, when the Europeans were a parochial set of peoples preoccupied with internal and interminable wars. Europe was also slowly recovering from a devastating epidemic of bubonic plague, known as the Black Death, which during the 1340s had killed about a third of the population. Moreover, relative to Asian peoples, the Europeans had shown less interest in new science and technology. Their spiritual and intellectual leaders usually insisted that everything worth knowing had already been discovered by the ancient Greeks and Romans, or had been revealed by their God and recorded in the Bible. Men who indulged in innovative scientific speculation risked prosecution for heresy by church courts.

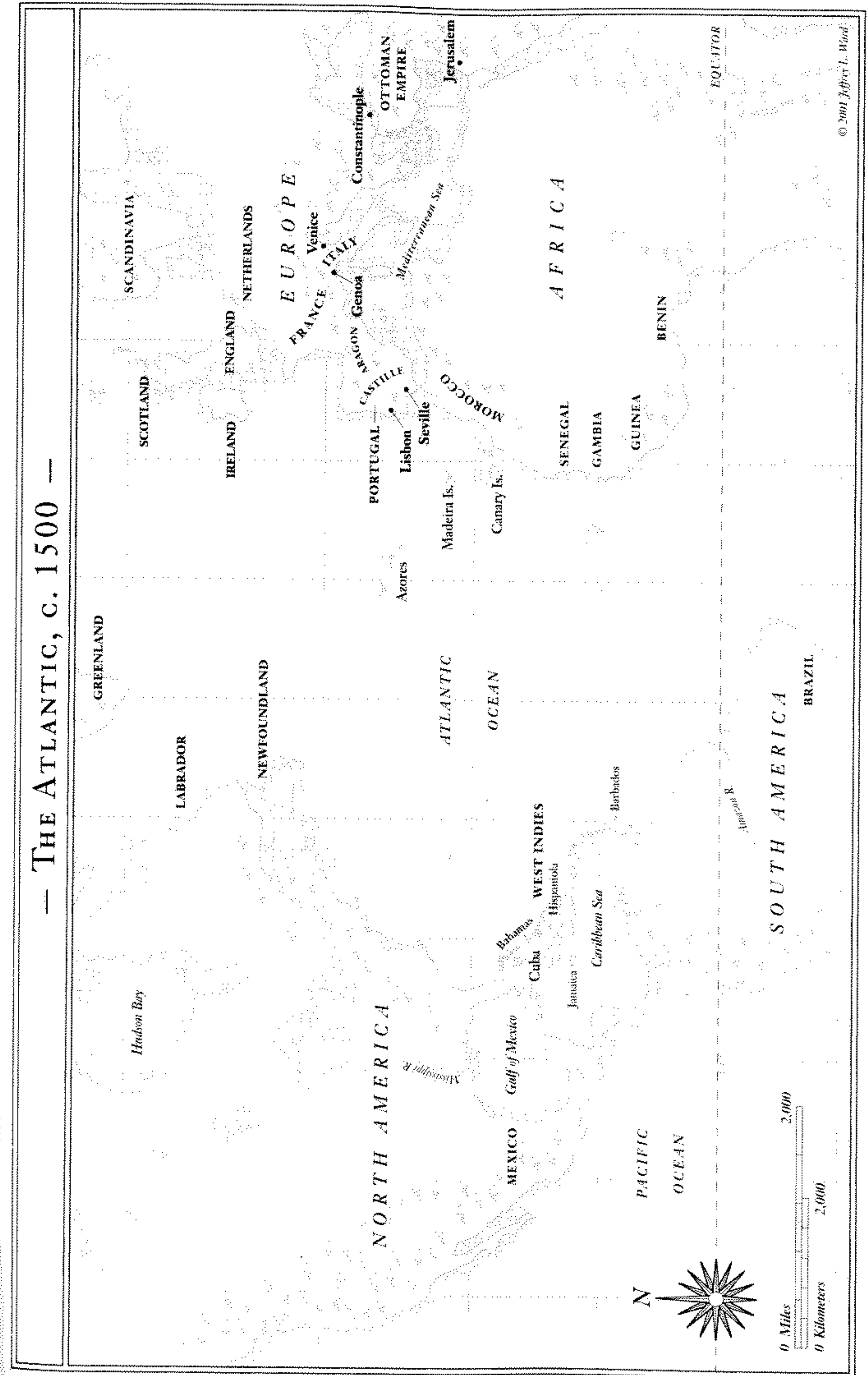
European Christians also felt hemmed in by the superior wealth, power, and technology possessed by their rivals and neighbors the Muslims, who subscribed to Islam, the world's other great expansionist faith. Dominated by the Ottoman Turks, the Muslim realms extended across North Africa and around the southern and eastern Mediterranean Sea to embrace the Balkans, the Near East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. The long and usually secure trade routes of the Muslim world reached from Morocco to the East Indies and from Mongolia to Senegal. Within that range, Muslim traders benefited from the far-flung prevalence of Arabic as the language of law, commerce, government, and science.

Fifteenth-century Christians felt beleaguered, on the losing end of a struggle for the future of humanity. During the preceding three centuries, European crusaders suffered bloody and humiliating defeats in their botched attempts to capture and hold Jerusalem. Worse yet, during the fifteenth century, the Ottoman Turks invaded southeastern Europe, capturing the strategic Greek city of Constantinople in 1453. The Turkish advance created in Europe a powerful sense of geographic and religious claustrophobia, which generated a profound longing to break out and circumvent the Muslim world.

European leaders concluded that the Muslims' power fed upon the wealth generated by their control of the most lucrative trade routes. By paying premium prices to Muslim merchants for the gold and ivory of sub-Saharan Africa and for the silks, gems, and spices of Asia, European consumers enriched the Islamic world while draining wealth from Christendom. Moreover, the Turkish sultan collected taxes on the luxury trade passing through his vast empire to Europe. Visionary Europeans hoped to weaken their enemy and enrich themselves by seeking an alternative trade route by sea to bypass Muslim merchants and Turkish tax collectors to reach sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia.

Popular literature reinforced the European longing for a new trade route to the fabled riches of the Far East. During the second half of the fifteenth century, the development of the printing press immensely lowered the cost and increased the volume of book publishing. More people learned to read, as books became available to more than the wealthy and leisured elite. By the end of the century, Europeans possessed twenty million copies of printed books. Readers especially delighted in vivid accounts of the wealth and power of India and China. These included the real travels of Marco Polo, an Italian merchant, as well as the pure fictions attributed to John de Mandeville. Inspired by their literary fantasies, European visionaries longed to reach the Far East to enlist their peoples and wealth for a climactic crusade against Islam. As a fabulous land that could fulfill Europeans' dreams, eastern Asia (and especially China) rendered the intruding barrier of the Muslim world all the more frustrating.

European expansionists could find hope to the southwest, on the Iberian Peninsula, where the kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, and Portugal gradually rolled back the Muslim Moors. In 1469 the marriage of Queen Isabella and Prince Ferdinand united Aragon and Castile to create "Spain." Zealous, able, and expansionist, Isabella and Ferdinand in 1492 completed the *reconquista* ("reconquest") by seizing Granada, the last Muslim principality in Iberia. They also looked westward, into the Atlantic, for new opportunities to extend their crusade. Close to Africa and facing the Atlantic, Spain and Portugal were well situated to lead the maritime expansion of Europe. In addition, the long and violent *reconquista* had institutionalized a crusading spirit in Iberia, developing an especially militant clergy and an ambitious warrior



caste known as the *hidalgos*—the two groups that would spearhead the conquest of the Americas. For maritime exploration and trade, the Spanish and Portuguese found reinforcements by welcoming Italian immigrants, especially merchants and mariners from Genoa, who included Christopher Columbus.

THE ATLANTIC

Along with the motives to explore the wider world, Iberians also cultivated the means. During the fifteenth century, the Spanish and Portuguese developed new ships, navigation techniques, geographic knowledge, and cannon that would enable their mariners to voyage around the globe and dominate distant coastal peoples. At first, the Iberians made none of these improvements with the intention of crossing the Atlantic. Instead, the innovations were incremental and stimulated by the growing commerce from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic to trade with northern Europe. But the improvements enabled daring Iberian mariners to expand their horizons, to explore the northwestern coast of Africa and to exploit newfound islands in the eastern Atlantic. Emboldened by those modest successes, at the end of the century some mariners attempted two especially bold and risky extensions: southeastward around Africa into the Indian Ocean and westward across the Atlantic in search of Japan and China.

During the fourteenth century, the focus of European trade shifted westward beyond the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic. The Iberian *reconquista* opened the western mouth of the Mediterranean to Christian shipping at the same time that the Turkish conquests tightened Muslim control over the eastern Mediterranean. Blocked to the east, the resourceful merchants and mariners of northwestern Italy, principally Genoa, sought alternatives to the west by developing a trade to northern Europe via ports in Iberia.

The new long-distance trade routes into stormy waters required versatile new vessels suitable to both Mediterranean and Atlantic conditions. Involving bulkier commodities, especially grain, the new routes also demanded ships with larger cargo capacities. The relatively shallow and more protected Mediterranean Sea favored maneuverable vessels with triangular lateen sails, while the longer hauls and stormier waters of the Atlantic Ocean demanded strong and durable ships with square sails. To facilitate a trade that traversed both the ocean and the sea, Iberian and Genoese shipbuilders developed a hybrid vessel, the *caravel*, that combined northern solidity with southern maneuverability. The caravel boasted three masts, with square sails on the main and fore masts and a lateen sail on the mizzen (rear) mast.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Iberian (and Genoese) mariners gradually refined their new ships and navigational techniques as they pressed southward along the Atlantic coast of West Africa. Lacking the means to organize and finance maritime exploration, the monarchs of Portugal and Castile relied on the private enterprise of profit-seeking merchants and adventurers willing to pay fees in return for royal licenses. Practical men, the adventurers did not pursue exploration for a pure love of geographic knowledge. Rather than launch especially risky voyages directly into the Atlantic unknown, they invested in more modest voyages that seemed likely to generate profits quickly. They proceeded incrementally along the northwest coast of Africa, seeking the sources of known commodities: fishing grounds and the gold, ivory, pepper, and slaves that Muslim North Africans had long tapped by their overland caravan trade with sub-Saharan Africa.

While probing along the northwest coast of Africa, Iberian and Italian mariners discovered three sets of islands in the eastern Atlantic: the Canaries, Azores, and Madeiras. Surrounded by rich fisheries and heavily forested with trees that yielded valuable dyes, the Atlantic islands provided immediate commodities. In turn, the Atlantic islands provided safe harbors and bases that facilitated voyages farther along the coast of Africa.

From bases on the Atlantic islands, Portuguese sailors took the lead in the contest to explore and exploit the western coast of Africa. By 1475 they had passed the equator to reach the powerful and prosperous West African kingdom of Benin. At first, the Portuguese practiced hit-and-run raids for plunder, but staunch African resistance obliged them to reconsider. Superior ships and guns enabled the Portuguese to dominate the coastal trade but did not suffice to overcome the immensely superior numbers of Africans on land. To procure gold, ivory, pepper, and slaves more securely, the Portuguese needed the cooperation of local rulers, who could bring the commodities from the interior. After 1450 the Portuguese wisely negotiated commercial treaties with African rulers, who permitted the construction of a few small fortified trading posts on the coast. The fortifications served primarily to keep away rival European vessels. Indeed, the Portuguese treated interlopers brutally, confiscating vessels and cargoes and casting crews into the sea.

The small but fertile Atlantic islands tempted exploitation by another, more intensive mode of colonization: settlement. In this mode, Europeans emigrated by the thousands to establish permanent new homes for themselves and their slaves. By hard labor, the settlers and slaves transformed the colonial environment to cultivate commodities for the European market. The absence of native peoples facilitated settlement on the Azores and Madeiras, which the Portuguese began to colonize in the early fifteenth century, but a people known as the Guanche inhabited the Canaries.

Numbering perhaps thirty thousand in 1400, the Guanche were an olive-complexioned people related to the Berbers of nearby North Africa. After emigrating to the islands about 2000 B.C., the Guanche neglected their means of navigation, losing contact with the continent. They cultivated wheat, beans, and peas and raised goats, pigs, and sheep. But the Guanche lacked cattle and horses and, for want of metallurgy, depended upon stone

tools and weapons. They were not politically united, but divided into rival chieftainships not only between but also within the seven major islands.

The Canaries had been known to the ancient Romans as the Fortunate Islands, but the fate of the Guanche at the hands of the Iberians was anything but fortunate. The Iberians turned Guanche resistance to colonial advantage by capturing them for sale as slaves to work on sugar plantations. In effect, enslavement converted the Guanche from an obstacle into a valuable asset that could finance the further process of conquest and colonization. Iberian slave-raiding expeditions began in the late fourteenth century and escalated early in the fifteenth.

Conditioned by the *reconquista*, the Iberians believed that the Guanche deserved to be conquered and enslaved for two reasons: they were neither civilized nor Christian. Making his own culture the standard of humanity, the Portuguese king assured the pope that the Guanche were "like animals" because they had "no contact with each other by sea, no writing, no kind of metal or money." The techniques and technologies that facilitated the Iberian conquest were also, by their absence among the natives, invoked to justify that conquest. In addition, the Iberians argued that they were obligated to spread the Christian faith to unbelievers. Any people who resisted that faith could justly be enslaved for the greater good of their souls and the profit of their Christian conquerors. By exposing the Guanche to Christian indoctrination, slavery might save their souls from hell, rendering their brief bondage on earth a small price to pay for their eternal salvation. But, with more greed than consistency, the Iberians also enslaved Guanche who had converted to Christianity in the vain hope of living peaceably beside their invaders.

In the mid-fifteenth century the Spanish pushed out the Portuguese and took over the further conquest of the Canary Islands. In 1483, after five hard years of fighting, the Spanish overcame the guerrilla resistance on the largest island, Grand Canary. The Guanche on La Palma and Tenerife did not succumb until the 1490s—at the same time that Columbus sailed west via the Canaries to America.

Mounted on horses and armed in steel, the Iberians possessed military advantages over the unarmored Guanche fighting on foot with stone weapons. But the deadliest advantage enjoyed by the invaders was unintentional and beyond their control. Within their bodies the Iberians carried especially deadly and secret allies: an array of microscopic pathogens previously unknown to the Canaries. Lacking the partial immunities enjoyed by the Iberians from long experience with the diseases, the Guanche died by the thousands from epidemics of bubonic plague, dysentery, pneumonia, and typhus. Death and demoralization undercut their ability to resist invasion. A Spanish friar reported, "If it had not been for the pestilence, [the conquest] would have taken much longer, the people being warlike, stubborn, and wary." In their invasion of the small and long-isolated Canaries, the Iberians

reaped the perverse advantage of their relatively large population located at a nexus of commercial exchange, which made for an especially diverse and regularly reinforced pool of diseases.

Although welcoming the reduction of Guanche armed resistance, the Spanish regretted the loss of so many valuable slaves. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Guanche were virtually extinct as assimilation and intermarriage enveloped the few survivors into the settler population and colonial culture. So complete was the cultural destruction that only nine sentences of the Guanche language have survived. The Guanche's fate did not bode well for subsequent native peoples who would experience European colonization.

During the fifteenth century, Iberians settled on the Azores, Canaries, and Madeiras in growing numbers. Colonists cleared the forest to cultivate fields of domesticated plants—especially wheat and grapes—and to pasture grazing animals introduced from Europe. The products of these activities were not just for their local subsistence but for profitable export in ships to markets in Europe. Although lucrative to landowners and merchants, the transformation proved ecologically costly. By 1500, trees were so scarce that the colonists lacked sufficient firewood and timber for building. Deforestation also induced erosion, depleting the soil on the hillsides. Droughts increased, for want of the trees that formerly captured the moisture in the oceanic fogs.

On the semitropical Madeiras and the Canaries (but not the cooler Azores), the Iberians succeeded in raising sugar, which was in great and growing demand in Europe. Enjoying high value per volume, sugar could be transported over long distances and still reap a profit at sale. Offering a warmer climate superior to the Mediterranean for the cultivation of sugar, the Madeiras and the Canaries became Europe's leading suppliers by 1500.

To produce sugar, the colonists developed the plantation mode of production. A plantation was a large tract of privately owned land worked by many slaves to produce a high-value commodity for export to an external market. As plantation colonies, the Canaries and Madeiras depended upon long-distance merchants and their shipping to carry away the sugar and to bring in tools, cloth, food, and new slaves.

At first, most of the slaves were Guanche, but they inconveniently and rapidly died from the new diseases. To replace the dead, the colonists imported Africans to work the sugar plantations. West African societies had long enslaved war captives and convicted criminals for sale to Arab traders, who drove them in caravans across the Sahara to the Mediterranean. This caravan trade was relatively small in scale, with a volume of only about one thousand slaves per year in the early fifteenth century. After 1450, however, the advent of European mariners along the West African coast expanded the slave trade. By 1500, the Portuguese annually bought about eighteen hundred African slaves, primarily to labor on the Canaries and Madeiras.

The conquest and transformation of the Atlantic islands prepared for the discovery, invasion, and remaking of the Americas. To colonize the islands (especially the Canaries) the Portuguese and Spanish learned how to organize and sustain prolonged oceanic voyages that were predatory as well as exploratory. The expeditions successfully tested steel weapons, mounted men, and war dogs upon natives on foot armed with stone implements. The invaders also learned how to exploit rivalries between indigenous peoples as well as their devastation by disease. By turning native peoples into commodities, for sale as plantation slaves, the invaders developed a method for financing the further destruction of their resistance. In the Atlantic islands, the newcomers also pioneered the profitable combination of the plantation system and the slave trade. In the fifteenth-century Atlantic islands (and principally the Canaries), we find the training grounds for the invasion of the Americas.

The discovery and profitable exploitation of the Atlantic islands also set precedents that encouraged Europeans to seek more islands just over the horizon to the west. Optimistic mapmakers began to enter imaginary western islands called Brazil and Antilla—names that would become attached to real places in the Americas by the end of the century. Indeed, such acts of European imagination inspired the discovery and conquest of those real places, which proved far larger, richer, and stranger than anticipated. For in 1492 no one in Europe had any idea that the next islands farther west lay close to two immense continents inhabited by millions of people.

COLUMBUS

As the colonizers of the Azores and Madeiras, the Portuguese might have maintained their westward momentum across the Atlantic. Instead, they turned south and east, probing along the African coast in search of a trade route to Asia. Their decision made perfect sense. Along the way they could reap the immediate and profitable commodities of Africa to finance further voyages to the ultimate prize: the trade of India, the East Indies, and China. By comparison, voyages due west into the Atlantic were shots into the unbounded unknown.

In 1487 the Portuguese mariner Bartolomeu Dias discerned how to use the counterclockwise winds of the South Atlantic to get around southern Africa. In 1498 Vasco da Gama exploited that discovery to enter and cross the coveted Indian Ocean, the gateway to the trade riches of the East. The profits kept the Portuguese focused on the southern and eastward route to Asia, leaving the westward route largely unguarded for their Spanish rivals to explore by default.

Spain pioneered transatlantic voyages, thanks to the aggressive ambition, religious mysticism, and navigational prowess of the Genoese mariner Christopher Columbus. In popular histories and films, Columbus appears anachronistically as a modernist, a secular man dedicated to humanism and scientific rationalism, a pioneer who overcame medieval superstition. In fact, he was a devout and militant Catholic who drew upon the Bible for his geographic theories. He also owned, cherished, and heavily annotated a copy of *The Travels of Marco Polo*, which inspired his dreams of reaching the trade riches and the unconverted souls of East Asia. Columbus hoped to convert the Asians to Christianity and to recruit their bodies and their wealth to assist Europeans in a final crusade to crush Islam and reclaim Jerusalem. Such a victory would then invite Christ's return to earth to reign over a millennium of perfect justice and harmony.

A man of substance as well as vision, Columbus was a talented navigator and experienced mariner. He had sailed the Atlantic northward to England and Ireland (and perhaps even to Iceland), west to the Azores, and as far south as the Guinea coast of West Africa. Everywhere he investigated stories and clues about mysterious islands presumed to lie farther west. If Columbus did indeed make it to Iceland, he probably heard something about the transatlantic voyages and discoveries of the Norse people of western Scandinavia.

During the ninth and tenth centuries, the Norse had explored and colonized a succession of austere islands, progressively larger, colder, and farther west and north: the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland. About the year 1000, Norse mariners from Greenland discovered the northeastern margin of North America: Baffin Island, Labrador, and Newfoundland. The Norse called the southern reaches of the new land Vinland, asserting that they had found wild grapes there. At Vinland the Norse established a small and short-lived colony—the first European settlement in North America. The Vinland colonists could not endure their isolation, their long and vulnerable supply line to Greenland, and the hostilities they provoked with the numerous natives, whom they named Skraelings (which meant "ugly wretches"). During the 1950s, archaeologists found the remains of a Norse settlement at the northern tip of Newfoundland—the probable site of Vinland.

The settlement collapsed within a generation, and Greenland entered a long, steady decline that reversed the Norse advance. An epidemic of bubonic plague reduced the Greenland Norse, and an increasingly cold global climate curtailed their agriculture and reduced their livestock. They also suffered from debilitating conflict with the more numerous Inuit (Eskimo) peoples of the north. At the end of the fifteenth century, the last Greenland Norse died out, just as Columbus was pioneering a new, more southern and enduring route across the Atlantic to America.

As early as 1484, Columbus hatched his scheme to head west across the Atlantic to find East Asia and open a profitable trade. Because no private

merchants possessed the capital or the inclination to finance such an expensive and risky voyage, Columbus sought royal patronage. He first approached the Portuguese crown, the leading promoter of long-distance exploration. After a careful hearing, the Portuguese authorities declined, regarding the western route as too speculative and dangerous. Columbus then tried the royal courts of France and England, without success, before turning to Spain as a last resort. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand approved, providing three small ships and most of the funding. They reasoned that even if Columbus failed to reach Asia, he might instead find valuable new islands like the Canaries.

Contrary to popular myth, fifteenth-century European intellectuals and rulers did not think that the world was flat. On the contrary, since the ancient Greeks, learned men had agreed that the world was round. They also accepted the theoretical possibility of sailing west to come up on the East Asian side of the known world. Although they expected to find some more Atlantic islands to the west, no Europeans anticipated that any large continents would obstruct a westward voyage to Asia. And given the high value of Asian commodities, there was a powerful commercial incentive for testing Columbus's theory.

What deterred Europeans from sailing due west for Asia was not a fear of sailing off the edge of the world but, instead, their surprisingly accurate understanding that the globe was too large. Ancient Greek mathematicians and geographers had determined that the world had a circumference of about 24,000 miles, which suggested that Asia lay about 10,000 to 12,000 miles west from Europe. Fifteenth-century European ships were too small to carry enough water and food to sustain their crews on a 10,000-mile voyage beyond contact with land.

Breaking with geographic orthodoxy, Columbus dared the westward trip to Asia because he underestimated the world's circumference as only 18,000 miles, which placed Japan a mere 3,500 miles west of Europe. In other words, a critical, and potentially fatal, mistake in calculations inspired his eccentric confidence that he could sail westward to Asia: the exact opposite of the popular myth that Columbus understood world geography better than his allegedly benighted contemporaries. Columbus was fortunate indeed that the unexpected Americas loomed at about the 3,000-mile mark to provide fresh water and provisions before his men mutinied. It is one of the ironies of world history that profound misunderstanding set in motion Columbus's discoveries.

In 1492, with three ships and about ninety men, Columbus followed the well-tested route southwest from Spain to the Canaries. Exploiting the trade winds, he turned west into the open ocean and had clear, easy sailing, reaching a new land after just thirty-three days. He first landed at the Bahama Islands, just east of Florida. Turning south, Columbus encountered the West Indies, islands framing the Caribbean Sea. But Columbus supposed that all

of the islands belonged to the East Indies and lay near the mainland of Asia. Although the native inhabitants (the Taino) were unlike any people he had ever seen or read about, Columbus insisted that they were "Indians," a misnomer that has endured.

The colonial enterprise arrived in the Americas in Columbus's mind. From the start, he treated the Caribbean Islands and their Taino inhabitants exactly as the Spanish had treated the Canaries and the Guanche—as places and people to be rendered into commercial plantations worked by forced labor. He rationalized that such treatment would benefit the Indians by exposing them to Christian salvation and Hispanic civilization. To justify their enslavement, Columbus emphasized their weakness:

> They do not have arms and they are all naked, and of no skill in arms, and so very cowardly that a thousand would not stand against three [armed Spaniards]. And so they are fit to be ordered about and made to work, plant, and do everything else that may be needed, and build towns and be taught our customs, and to go about clothed.

To impress and intimidate the Taino, Columbus publicly demonstrated the sound and fury of his gunpowder weapons.

Columbus unilaterally declared the natives subject to the Spanish crown. He reported, "I found very many islands filled with people innumerable, and of them all I have taken possession for their highnesses, by proclamation made and with the royal standard unfurled, and no opposition was offered to me." Of course, not understanding a word of Spanish, the Indians failed to recognize any cue to oppose Columbus's ceremony. As a further act of possession, he systematically renamed all of the islands to honor the Spanish royal family or the Christian holy days. Columbus even renamed himself, adopting the first name "Christoferens"—meaning "Christ-bearer," testimony to his sense of divine mission.

After his largest ship ran aground, Columbus decided immediately to start a colony by obliging thirty-nine crew members to remain on the island he called Hispaniola. They built a crude fort from the timbers of their wrecked ship. In the two remaining vessels Columbus sailed home, taking a roundabout route north and then east, to catch winds bound for Europe. He reached Spain in March 1493 to receive a hero's welcome from King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

What happened next rendered Columbus's voyage of enduring and global significance, far beyond the achievements of his Norse predecessors. The Norse discoveries proved a dead end because they remained largely unknown outside of the northwestern fringe of Scandinavia. Thanks to the newly invented printing press, word of Columbus's voyage and discovery spread rapidly and widely through Europe. Eagerly read, his published report ran through nine editions in 1493 and twenty by 1500. Publication in

multiplying print helped to ensure that Columbus's voyages would lead to an accelerating spiral of further voyages meant to discern the bounds and exploit the peoples of the new lands.

Intrigued by Columbus's glowing reports of the Indians' gold jewelry and their supposed proximity to Asia, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella promptly decided to send Columbus back with another, larger expedition of exploration and colonization. The king and queen declared Columbus admiral and governor of the new islands and promised him a tenth of all profits made by exploiting them. Devout Catholics, Ferdinand and Isabella also vowed to convert the Indians to Christianity, dreading that otherwise so many thousands would continue to die in ignorance to spend their eternity in hell. The monarchs acted so quickly from a well-founded fear that the newly alarmed Portuguese would soon send their own expeditions to the west.

With the assistance of the pope, the Spanish and the Portuguese negotiated the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas, which split the world of new discoveries by drawing a north-south boundary line through the mid-Atlantic west of the Azores. The Portuguese secured the primary right to exploit the coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean, while the Spanish obtained Columbus's western discoveries. Further exploration determined that South America bulged eastward beyond the treaty line, placing a land called Brazil in the Portuguese sphere. In dividing the world, no one bothered to consult the Indians, for the Iberians and the pope considered them pagan savages without rights under international law. The other western European kingdoms refused to recognize the treaty, for they denied that the pope could exclude them from exploring and exploiting the new lands. But no European leaders thought that the Indians could, or should, be left alone in their former isolation and native beliefs.

In September 1493, Columbus returned to the West Indies with seventeen ships, twelve hundred men (including farmers and artisans, but no women), sugarcane plants, and much livestock. The new colony was supposed to feed itself; recoup the costs by remitting hides, gold, sugar, and slaves to Spain; and serve as a base for further exploration in search of Japan and China. The Spanish were coming to stay, to dominate the land and its natives, and to weave the new lands into an empire based in Europe.

At Hispaniola, Columbus discovered that the Taino Indians had killed the thirty-nine men he had left behind the year before. In the Spanish deaths, Columbus found the pretext for waging a war of conquest. Employing the military advantages of horses, trained dogs, gunpowder, and steel, Columbus killed and captured hundreds of Indians on Hispaniola and adjoining islands. In 1495 he shipped 550 captives to Spain for sale to help pay for his expedition. Because most died during the voyage or within a year of arrival from exposure to European diseases, Columbus had to abandon the project of selling Indians in Spain. Instead, he distributed Indian captives among the colonists to work on their plantations and to serve as sex slaves.

By 1496, Hispaniola's surviving "free" natives had been rendered tributary—obliged to bring in a quota of gold for every person over the age of fourteen.

Columbus's slaughter and enslavement of Indians troubled the pious Spanish monarchs, who declared in 1500 that the Indians were "free and not subject to servitude." But Ferdinand and Isabella failed to close the legal loophole exploited by Spanish colonizers. It remained legal to enslave Indians taken in any "just war," which the colonists characterized as any violence they conducted against resisting natives.

In addition to killing and enslaving the Taino, Columbus antagonized most of the colonists, who bristled at his domineering manner and hot temper. As a Genoese upstart, Columbus commanded little respect among the Spanish colonists, especially when he sought to enrich himself by restricting their undisciplined pursuit of easy wealth. Violent mutinies and more violent reprisals by Columbus induced the monarchs to revoke his executive authority in 1500. Hispaniola became a crown colony governed by a royal appointee, rather than the feudal fiefdom of Columbus. Although displaced as governor, Columbus continued to serve the Spanish as a maritime explorer. In 1498 and 1502 his third and fourth transatlantic voyages revealed long stretches of the South and Central American coast. Nonetheless, to his death in 1506, Columbus stubbornly insisted that all of his discoveries lay close to the coast of Asia.

Other explorers, often working for rival powers, expanded upon Columbus's discoveries to demonstrate that he had, instead, found a "New World." In 1497 the English king employed John Cabot, a Genoese mariner, to seek a northern route across the Atlantic to Asia. Instead, Cabot also ran into a continent, rediscovering the northern shores previously explored and briefly colonized by the Norse. In ignorance of the former Vinland, Cabot called his landfall Newfoundland. Far to the south, in tropical waters, a Portuguese fleet commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral discovered the coast of Brazil in 1500. A year later, Amerigo Vespucci, a Genoese mariner who alternated between Spanish and Portuguese employ, explored enough of the coast of South America to deem it a new continent. Consequently, European mapmakers began to call the new land by a variant of his first name—America. But the Spanish avoided the new term, clinging instead to Las Indias (the Indies), as Columbus had insisted.

Although Columbus had not reached Asia, he did find the substance of what he sought: a source of riches that would, in the long term, enable European Christendom to grow more powerful and wealthy than the Muslim world. During the next three centuries, the mineral and plantation wealth of the Americas financed the continuing expansion of European commerce, the further development of its technology and military power. Moreover, the very encounter with strange lands and people contributed to the broadening horizons of Europe's intellectual leaders, spurring the sustained pursuit of scientific advances.

HISPANIOLA

The Spanish invaded America with remarkable rapidity as their growing shipping, cargoes, and colonists connected the European and the American shores of the Atlantic. In 1508 alone, forty-five vessels crossed from Spain to the Caribbean islands. With the Canaries as their colonial model, the Spanish aggressively modified Hispaniola, introducing new crops, especially sugarcane, and new animals, including cattle, mules, sheep, horses, and pigs. Assisted by their plants and animals, the invaders remade the environment to sustain themselves, to obtain commodities valuable enough to ship to market in Spain, and to dominate and convert the local natives, the Taino. A Spaniard explained, "Without settlement there is no good conquest, and if the land is not conquered, the people will not be converted. Therefore the maxim of the conqueror must be to settle." The conquest of nature and the domination of natives worked reciprocally.

Transatlantic colonization was difficult and often deadly. The first colonists on Hispaniola suffered severely from malnutrition and sickness. Crowded into small, filthy ships for long voyages, they arrived weak, hungry, and diseased. Barely able to work, they failed to grow enough food during the early years, prolonging their vulnerability to sickness. Probably two-thirds of the Hispaniola colonists died during the first decade of settlement, 1493-1504. But the natives suffered even more severely, as the colonists shared their diseases and forced the Taino to provide food and labor.

As with the Guanche on the Canaries, colonization rapidly destroyed the Taino people of Hispaniola. In 1494 a Spaniard reported that more than 50,000 Taino had died, "and they are falling each day, with every step, like cattle in an infected herd." From a population of at least 300,000 in 1492, the Taino declined to about 33,000 by 1510 and to a mere 500 by 1548. The great missionary friar Bartolomé de Las Casas mourned the virtual extermination "of the immensity of the peoples that this island held, and that we have seen with our own eyes."

Like the Guanche, the Taino died primarily from virulent new diseases unintentionally brought to the Americas by the Spanish, but the colonizers compounded the destructive impact of the diseases by callous exploitation. With armed force, the Spanish drove the Taino to labor on colonial mines, ranches, and plantations, where they suffered a brutal work regimen. Natives who resisted Spanish demands faced destructive and deadly raids on their villages by colonial soldiers. Abandoning their crops and villages, thousands of Taino refugees starved in the densely forested hills. Dislocated, traumatized, overworked, and underfed, they proved especially vulnerable to disease. Las Casas interpreted the 1518 smallpox epidemic as sent by a merciful and angry God "to free the few Indians who remained from so much torment and the anguished life they suffered from, in all types of labor, especially in the mines, and at the same time in order to castigate those who oppressed them." In sum, the natives suffered from a deadly combination of microparasitism by disease and macroparasitism by Spanish colonizers, preying upon native labor. Although not genocidal in intent—for the Spanish preferred to keep the Taino alive and working as tributaries and slaves—the colonization of Hispaniola was genocidal in effect.

EPIDEMICS

Although extreme in its rapidity and thoroughness, the depopulation of Hispaniola was far from unique in the Americas. Everywhere the first European explorers and colonists reported horrifying and unprecedented epidemics among the native peoples. For example, in New England during the 1620s, a colonist reported that the Indians

> died on heapes, as they lay in their houses; and the living, that were able to shift for themselves, would runne away and let them dy, and let their Carkases ly above the ground without burial. . . . And the bones and skulls upon the severall places of their habitations made such a spectacle after my coming into those partes, that as I travailed in the Forrest, nere the Massachusetts [Bay], it seemed to mee a new found Golgotha.

The observers also marveled that so few of their own people succumbed to the same diseases.

The epidemics spread in association with the newcomers. First colonized, the Caribbean islands suffered the first great epidemics. Spanish soldiers unwittingly exported the diseases to the mainland between 1510 and 1535, when they conquered Central America, Mexico, and Peru. During the mid-sixteenth century, Spanish invaders introduced epidemics into the American southwest and southeast. Epidemics afflicted the natives of New England and eastern Canada during the early decades of the seventeenth century, as they encountered European fishermen and fur traders. Along the Pacific coast and in the Great Plains, deaths peaked when explorers, traders, or missionaries arrived in the late eighteenth century. In 1793 an English explorer in the Pacific northwest found the beaches littered with skulls and bones and saw the faces of Indian survivors pocked by the scars of smallpox. The Mandan Indians of the northern Missouri Valley (in present-day North Dakota) escaped the worst ravages until 1837, when, in the course of a few weeks, smallpox destroyed all but forty of their two thousand people.

In any given locale, the first wave of epidemics afflicted almost every Indian. Within a decade of contact, about half the natives died from the new diseases. Repeated and diverse epidemics provided little opportunity for native populations to recover by reproduction. After about fifty years of

contact, successive epidemics reduced a native group to about a tenth of its precontact numbers. Some especially ravaged peoples lost their autonomous identity, as the few survivors joined a neighboring group. Consequently, the Indian nations ("tribes") of colonial history represent a subset of the many groups that had existed before the great epidemics. Historian Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., vividly characterizes the population collapse as "surely the greatest tragedy in the history of the human species."

Recognizing this demographic catastrophe, recent scholars have dramatically revised upward their estimates of the pre-Columbian population in the Americas. Because the natives lacked statistical records (and their first conquerors rarely kept any), all calculations of the contact populations are highly speculative. Early in the twentieth century, most scholars were "low counters," who estimated native numbers in 1492 at only about ten million in all of the Americas, including about one million north of the mouth of the Rio Grande (i.e., the present United States and Canada). More recent scholars, the "high counters," claim that their predecessors neglected the abundant evidence for the dramatic depopulation of the Americas during the sixteenth century. The high counters also draw upon archaeological evidence that much of the Americas was densely settled in 1492, and upon generous calculations for the capacity of given environments to support large human populations.

At a minimum, the high counters double the estimated population of the pre-Columbian Americas to twenty million. Some insist upon 100 million or more. Narrowing their view to just the lands north of the Rio Grande, the revisionists claim that the future United States and Canada together contained at least two and perhaps ten million people in 1492. Most scholars now gravitate to the middle of that range: about fifty million Indians in the two American continents, with about five million of them living north of Mexico. Even this middle range represents a fivefold increase over the former "low count."

Our revised understanding of a well-populated North America in 1492 belies the former characterization of the continent as a "virgin land" virtually untouched by humans and longing for European settlement. According to the nineteenth-century historian George Bancroft, in 1492 the future United States was "an unproductive waste . . . its only inhabitants a few scattered tribes of feeble barbarians." Ideologically charged, such a description celebrated colonization as entirely positive. More recently, the historian Francis Jennings aptly describes colonial America as a "widowed land," rendered so by the deadly microbes that accompanied the European invasion.

The exchange of infectious diseases between the invaders and the natives was remarkably one-sided. American pathogens did not kill the colonizers in anything approaching the proportions that European diseases claimed among the natives. Apparently only one major disease, venereal syphilis,

passed from the Americas into Europe with the returning explorers and sailors. If so, syphilis exacted a measure of revenge on behalf of the native women raped by the invaders. Although painful and sometimes fatal, syphilis did not kill enough people to stem Europe's population growth during the sixteenth century. After about 1600, the disease lost much of its virulence as European bodies adjusted to it and as the pathogen adapted to a longer life within its hosts. The Europeans died in far greater numbers when they tried to colonize sub-Saharan Africa, where they did encounter relatively novel and especially virulent tropical diseases, principally *falciparum* malaria and yellow fever. Unwittingly, the Europeans imported those African diseases into the American tropics and subtropics with the slaves brought to work on their plantations. Those African maladies then added to the epidemics that devastated the Native Americans.

In part the exchange of pathogens was so one-sided because the Indians lived in a hemisphere with fewer and less virulent diseases. Passing from Siberia into North America about twelve thousand years ago, the Paleo-Indians spent many generations in the subarctic, where the long and bitter winters discouraged many pathogenic microbes that thrive in warmer climes. Moreover, the arctic rigors tended quickly to kill humans suffering from debilitating diseases, leaving a healthier population of survivors. And as nomadic hunter-gathering peoples scattered over an immense territory, the Paleo-Indians did not sustain the "crowd diseases" that need a steady succession of hosts. In the Americas, the natives gradually developed new diseases. Studies of pre-Columbian skeletons reveal the marks of rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, pinta, yaws, hepatitis, encephalitis, polio, tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, and venereal syphilis. All were formidable but endemic enemies that killed their share of natives every year, but not enough to prevent the overall growth of the Indian population. Meanwhile, in Europe and Asia the world's champion killers evolved after the Paleo-Indians had emigrated from Asia to the Americas. The newer Eurasian diseases included smallpox, typhus, diphtheria, bubonic plague, malaria, yellow fever, cholera, and influenza.

Three factors helped develop especially powerful pathogens in the Old World. First, long-distance trade and invasions were more routine in Europe and Asia, providing vectors for the exchange and mutation of multiple diseases. In effect, the Old World diseases benefited from a much larger pool of potential hosts. Passing to and fro, these pathogens gradually strengthened the immunities of the disease-embattled peoples of the Old World, rendering them deadly carriers when they passed into places where those diseases were not endemic.

Second, urbanization was older and more widespread in the Old World than in the New—and especially virulent diseases develop where people live in permanent concentrations. Crowded populations keep diseases cycling

among numerous inhabitants, which is especially important to deadly diseases with only human carriers, such as smallpox. Concentrated human populations also accumulate more garbage and excrement, which breed many microbes that inflict gastrointestinal diseases. And the filth also sustains enlarged populations of vermin—mice, rats, roaches, houseflies, and worms—which serve as carriers for some diseases. The most notorious example is bubonic plague, which is borne by fleas carried by rats (as well as people).

Cities were fewer in North America, largely restricted to central Mexico, and usually much cleaner than their European counterparts. By living in filth, urban Europeans paid a high price in steady losses to endemic disease and occasional exposure to new epidemics. But they also rendered themselves formidable carriers of diseases to distant and cleaner peoples with far less experience with so many pathogens.

Third, the people of Europe, Africa, and Asia (but not the Americas) lived among large numbers of domesticated mammals, including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and horses, which share microscopic parasites with humans, encouraging the development of new and especially powerful diseases as viruses shift back and forth between the species. We call one strain of influenza "swine flu" because pigs exchange it with humans. By domesticating several mammals, the early herders and farmers of the Old World helped breed new pathogens unknown to their hunting-and-gathering ancestors. In contrast, North American natives domesticated only one mammal, the dog, which rarely shares diseases with its best friends.

Beginning in 1492, Europeans suddenly carried their legacy of more extensive and virulent diseases to the Americas. The breath, blood, sweat, and lice of the colonizers (and of their livestock and rats) conveyed especially deadly pathogens that consumed Indians who lacked the immunological resistance of past experience. The greatest killers were eruptive fevers, especially smallpox, measles, and typhus. But Indians also suffered from new respiratory infections, such as whooping cough and pneumonia. Even the mild childhood ailments of Europeans, such as chickenpox, killed Indians of all ages. One disease often weakened a victim for a second to kill. For example, many Indians barely survived smallpox only to succumb to measles, pneumonia, or pleurisy.

Because nearly everyone in a village became ill at the same time, few could care for the sick. During the 1630s in New England, a colonist described a smallpox epidemic among the Massachusetts Indians:

> They fell down so generally of this disease as they were in the end not able to help one another, not to make a fire nor to fetch a little water to drink, nor any to bury the dead. . . . They would burn the wooden trays & dishes they ate their meat in, and their very bows & arrows. And some would crawl out on all fours to get a little water, and sometimes die by the way and not to be able to get in again.

For want of healthy people to tend the sick, to fetch food and water and keep fires going, many victims died of starvation, dehydration, or exposure.

Smallpox was the most conspicuous and devastating of the new diseases. A highly communicable virus, smallpox passes through the air on moisture droplets or dust particles to enter the lungs of a new host. Consequently, the breath of victims conveyed death to those in their vicinity. After an incubation period of twelve days, the victims came down with a high fever and vomiting, followed three to four days later with gruesome sores over their entire bodies. Painful, incapacitating, and disfiguring, smallpox transformed people into a hideous mass of rotten flesh. In sixteenth-century Mexico an Indian described smallpox victims:

> They could not move; they could not stir; they could not change position, nor lie on one side; nor face down, nor on their backs. And if they stirred, much did they cry out. Great was its destruction. Covered, mantled with pustules, very many people died of them.

Survivors bore scars for the rest of their lives, and some suffered blindness as well. In addition to depleting the Indians' numbers, the new diseases sapped their morale. After one epidemic, a New England colonist said of the Indians, "Their countenance is dejected, and they seem as a people affrighted."

Neither sixteenth-century natives nor colonizers knew about the existence of microbes, much less that some caused disease. Instead, both assumed that the epidemics manifested some violent disruption of supernatural power. Colonists interpreted the diseases as sent by their God to punish Indians who resisted conversion to Christianity. Indians blamed the epidemics on sorcery practiced by the newcomers. When the native shamans failed to stop or cure a disease, they became discredited as ineffectual against the superior sorcery of the newcomers, who survived epidemics that slaughtered the natives. Because kinship ties defined native society and culture, the rapid destruction of so many relatives was profoundly disorienting and disruptive. Natives lamented that their guiding elders were all dead "and their wisdom is buried with them." In search of new wisdom, a new supply of supernatural power, the most devastated native peoples gave Christian missionaries their desperate attention.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the colonizers did not intentionally disseminate disease. Indeed, they did not yet know how to do so. Especially during the sixteenth century, the colonizers valued Indian bodies and souls even more than they coveted Indian land. They needed Indians as coerced labor to work on mines, plantations, ranches, and farms. And Christian missionaries despaired when diseases killed Indians before they could be baptized. Only later, and almost exclusively in the English colonies, did some colonists cheer epidemics for depopulating the lands that they wanted for settlement.

During the sixteenth century, the European colonizers had expected to live as economic parasites on the labor of many Indians, but the epidemics upset their best-laid plans. Left with large tracts of fertile but depopulated lands, the colonists cast about for a new source of cheap and exploitable labor that was less susceptible to disease. Beginning in 1518 to Hispaniola, the colonizers imported growing numbers of slaves from West Africa. Prior to 1820, at least two-thirds of the twelve million emigrants from the Old to the New World were enslaved Africans rather than free Europeans. Most of the slaves were put to work on tropical or subtropical plantations raising cash crops—primarily sugar, rice, indigo, tobacco, cotton, and coffee—for the European market. By 1700, people of African descent prevailed in the American tropics, especially around the Caribbean.

In the temperate zones, the epidemics opened up lands for colonial settlement by free European farmers. In one famous example, the Plymouth colonists of New England in 1620 had their pick of recently abandoned Indian villages with conveniently cleared land. One colonist remarked, "Thousands of men have lived there, which died in a great plague not long since: and pity it was and is to see so many goodly fields, and so well seated, without men to dress and manure the same." Imagine how much more difficult the colonists' lot would have been if instead they had come to a crowded land of well-defended villages, or to a truly virgin continent without any already cleared lands.

American colonization tapped Europe's growing population, which swelled from about 80 million in 1492 to 105 million in 1650 and nearly 180 million by 1800. The increase was especially dramatic and significant in the British Isles (including Ireland), the greatest source of North American emigrants prior to 1800. From a population of 5 million in 1492, the inhabitants of Great Britain surged to 16 million by 1800, when another 5 million Britons already lived across the Atlantic. The post-1492 growth nearly doubled Europe's share in the world's population from about 11 percent in 1492 to approximately 20 percent in 1800. At the same time, the Native American proportion of the global population collapsed from about 7 percent in 1492 to less than 1 percent in 1800. The forced marriage of the two hemispheres meant a demographic boom for Europe but a demographic disaster for the Americas, with enduring consequences for world history.

The demographic and colonial history of Africa offers an instructive contrast to North America. Despite inferior firepower, until the nineteenth century the Africans more than held their own against European invaders because African numbers remained formidable. Unlike the Native Americans, the Africans did not dwindle from exposure to European diseases, with which they were largely familiar. On the contrary, African tropical diseases killed European newcomers in extraordinary numbers until the development of quinine in the nineteenth century. Thereafter, European soldiers conquered most of Africa, but European colonists remained small minorities

amid immense African majorities. Without a demographic advantage, colonial rule proved short-lived as the Africans reclaimed power during the twentieth century. In stark contrast, by 1800 in present-day Canada and the United States, only about 600,000 Indians remained, already a small minority in a region dominated by five million Euro-Americans and one million African-American slaves.

FOOD

What can account for the dramatic new growth of Europe's population after 1492? We cannot credit advances in medical science or public hygiene, which were few and barely affected the mass of the population prior to 1800. Indeed, the Europeans were proverbial for their backward medicine and filthy cities. In 1519, Spanish soldiers marveled that the great Aztec city of Tenochtitlán was much larger and yet far cleaner than anything they had known at home.

An expansion of the food supply offers a better explanation for the European growth. As Thomas Malthus noted in the late eighteenth century, human populations tend to grow up to the limit of their food supply and then stagnate as malnutrition, famine, and disease keep pace with reproduction. But populations surge whenever people can increase their supply of nutrition, for an abundant diet encourages good health and rapid reproduction.

After 1492 the European diet improved, in part from enhanced long-distance transportation for produce and better techniques for rotating and fertilizing traditional grain crops. But above all, the improvement derived from the adoption of new food crops first cultivated in the Americas.

Native Americans had developed certain wild plants into domesticated hybrids that were more productive than their Old World counterparts. Measured as an average yield in calories per hectare (a hectare is ten thousand square meters, the equivalent of 2.5 acres), cassava (9.9 million), maize (7.3 million), and potatoes (7.5 million) all trump the traditional European crops: wheat (4.2 million), barley (5.1 million), and oats (5.5 million). By introducing the New World crops to the Old World, the colonizers dramatically expanded the food supply and their population.

A tropical plant, cassava (also known as manioc) could not be cultivated in Europe, but it thrived in Africa after its introduction (along with maize) by Portuguese mariners during the sixteenth century. The resulting surge in African numbers supplied the outflow of slaves to the American tropics and subtropics, where enslaved Africans replaced the natives decimated by the pathogens recently introduced from the Old World.

In Europe, maize and potatoes endowed farmers with larger yields on smaller plots, which benefited the poorest peasants. It took at least five acres planted in grain to support a family, but potatoes could subsist three families

on the same amount of land. In addition, the new crops were more flexible, enabling European farmers to cultivate soils hostile to their traditional grains. Unlike wheat, maize can grow in sandy soils and thrive in hot climes, and potatoes prosper in cold, thin, damp soils unsuitable for any grain. In effect, maize and potatoes extended the amount of land that Europeans could cultivate either to feed themselves or to produce fodder for their cattle.

From a slow start, maize and potatoes proliferated in European fields. In 1498, Columbus wrote of maize: "There is now a lot of it in Castile." During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, maize cultivation spread eastward around the Mediterranean to become fundamental to the peasant diet in Italy and southern France by 1700. Potato cultivation expanded more slowly, primarily after 1680 in northern, central, and eastern Europe—often with encouragement from governments eager to alleviate famines and promote population growth. During the eighteenth century, the potato first gained its close association with Ireland, and Irish numbers grew from 3 million in 1750 to 5.25 million in 1800. The Irish then became vulnerable to any blight that devastated their potato crop. When such a blight struck during the 1840s, thousands starved to death and millions fled overseas, primarily to North America.

In microcosm and in exaggerated form, Ireland tells a common European story. The new crops developed by Native Americans and introduced to Europe by their conquerors contributed to a great surge in the Old World's population. That growth eventually caught up to the food supply, producing renewed hunger. But, in contrast to the past, the European hungry could seek relief by emigrating thousands of miles over the ocean to help settle the Americas. There they found underpopulated lands, recently rendered so by the diseases that Europeans had exported to the New World.

In sum, although disastrous for American natives, the post-1492 exchange of New and Old World microbes and plants provided a double boon to Europeans. First, they obtained an expanded food supply that permitted their reproduction at an unprecedented rate. Second, they acquired access to fertile and extensive new lands largely emptied of native peoples by the exported diseases. In effect, the post-Columbian exchange depleted people on the American side of the Atlantic while swelling those on the European and African shores. Eventually, the surplus population flowed westward to refill the demographic vacuum created on the American side of the Atlantic world.

ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM

The colonizers brought along plants and animals new to the Americas, some by design and others by accident. Determined to farm in a European manner, the colonists introduced their domesticated livestock—honeybees, pigs, horses, mules, sheep, and cattle—and their domesticated plants, including

wheat, barley, rye, oats, grasses, and grapevines. But the colonists also inadvertently carried pathogens, weeds, and rats. The unwanted imports spread rapidly and voraciously through the American landscape to the detriment of native plants, animals, and peoples. In sum, the remaking of the Americas was a team effort by a set of interdependent species led and partially managed (but never fully controlled) by European people.

Because land was more abundant than labor in the colonies, the colonists reduced their work by building their fences around their relatively small crop fields. The settlers then allowed their livestock to roam freely in the hinterland, foraging for wild plants. In 1518 a Spaniard reported that thirty stray cattle ordinarily multiplied to three hundred within four years on a lush Caribbean island. In 1700 a visitor to Virginia observed that the pigs "swarm like vermin upon the Earth. . . . The Hogs run where they want and find their own Support in the Woods without any Care of the Owners." The roaming livestock often escaped from the control of their owners to compose feral herds that defied recapture.

Ranging cattle and pigs wreaked havoc on an American environment that the Indians depended upon. In the Caribbean islands, Spanish pigs consumed the manioc tubers, sweet potatoes, guavas, and pineapples that the Taino Indians cultivated. In New England, the rooting swine thrived on the intertidal shellfish that the Indians gathered for their own subsistence. The pigs and cattle also invaded native crop fields to consume the precious maize, beans, and squash. When Indians killed and ate trespassing livestock, the colonists howled in protest and demanded compensation for their lost property. When denied, angry colonists sought a disproportionate revenge by raiding and burning Indian villages.

Other European animals hitched along to the Americas despite the colonizers' best efforts to prevent it. These included the European rats, which were larger and more aggressive than their North American counterparts. Hated parasites on crops and granaries, the rats were skilled stowaways in almost every wooden ship. Once ashore, they rapidly reproduced and spread, afflicting the colonists but especially the Indians, whose storage pits proved woefully inadequate to repel such novel, voracious, numerous, and resourceful pests.

The colonists also unintentionally imported disagreeable plants known as weeds: fast-growing and hardy plants that compete with the edible domesticated plants preferred by people. The nineteenth-century naturalist Susan Fenimore Cooper described weeds as plants with "a habit of shoving themselves forward upon ground where they are not needed, rooting themselves in soil intended for better things, for plants more useful, more fragrant, or more beautiful." Weeds reproduce and grow rapidly, filling any piece of open, disturbed ground. Tough and combative weeds endure exceptional abuse to push up and around rival plants.

Prior to the colonial invasion, Indian farmers certainly had to cope with

their own weeds, such as ragweed, goldenrod, and milkweed. But the indigenous weeds were not as tough as those that came from Europe, which included dandelions, thistles, plantain, nettles, nightshade, and sedge. Just as the Europeans had acquired more virulent strains of microbes, they had also developed more persistent and hardy weeds. In large part, the more formidable weeds and the more dangerous microbes of Europe had a common cause. Over the centuries, both had adapted to life amid the large domesticated mammals kept by peasants and herders. European weeds had evolved to endure the heavy trampling and voracious grazing of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and horses. Hardy opportunists, the Old World weeds also benefited from the earth exposed to the sun by animal-drawn plows.

Weeds spread and colonized as rapidly as the European rats and pigs. Mixed in the hay and grain brought in European ships to subsist their imported livestock, the weed seeds passed through digestion for deposit with manure wherever the animals roamed. In 1672 the naturalist John Josslyn identified twenty-two weeds as already "sprung up since the English planted and kept cattle in New England." One of the newcomers was the plantain that northeastern American Indians named "Englishman's foot" because it seemed to sprout wherever the colonists walked. Today botanists estimate that 258 of the approximately 500 weed species in the United States originated in the Old World.

Colonists and their livestock unwittingly facilitated the spread of their weeds by disrupting the native plants and by exposing great swaths of soil to the sun, wind, and rain. The newcomers hacked down the forests to procure lumber and to make farms, where grazing and plowing exposed the soil to erosion and desiccation. Especially well adapted to Europeans and their livestock, Old World weeds outdid their American cousins in reclaiming the bare and battered ground. Unlike their New World counterparts, the newly arrived weeds had abundant experience filling in where plows, hooves, and grazing mouths opened up gaping holes in the wild biota. Although unappreciated by farmers, the imported weeds helped stabilize the environmental shock wrought by colonization.

The European invasion effected an ecological revolution—an abrupt break with the interplay of nature and humanity that had previously characterized life in the Americas. Never before in human history had so much of the world's flora and fauna, large and small, been so thoroughly and so abruptly mixed and altered. This is certainly not to say that the native peoples previously had lived in nature without affecting it, for every human group affects its setting. Indeed, by fishing and hunting, by burning forests and clearing fields, and by domesticating and cultivating a few favored plants, Native Americans had selectively shaped their nature. This impact was greatest where Indians were most numerous, especially in central Mexico and the great Mississippi Valley. But the Europeans and their associated biota placed new and unprecedented demands upon the American nature. By a mix of design and accident, the newcomers triggered a cascade of processes that alienated the land, literally and figuratively, from its indigenous people.

In sum, native peoples and their nature experienced an invasion not just of foreign people but also of their associated livestock, microbes, vermin, and weeds. These worked in both synergy and competition to transform the environment, shaking and altering the nature previously known and made by the natives. When in the most isolated and least developed pockets of North America today, we like to think that we have rediscovered a timeless "wilderness" and that we experience there the nature known by Native Americans before 1492. In fact, everywhere we see an altered nature profoundly affected by all the plants and animals that tagged along with the colonists to remake this continent.

Although the demographic disaster and ecological imperialism undermined the Indians' ability to defend their lands and autonomy, they remained sufficiently numerous and resourceful to hinder and compromise the colonial conquest. Despite the depopulation, nowhere did the colonizers find a truly empty land. Although the population collapse made it possible (even probable) that European colonists and their slaves would eventually swarm over the continent and subdue the native peoples, that process took nearly four centuries to complete.

Although shrunken in number and shaken by catastrophe, the native peoples proved remarkably resilient and resourceful in adapting to their difficult new circumstances. Sometimes natives seized upon the new plants and animals for their own advantage. For example, on the Great Plains during the eighteenth century, the Indians acquired large herds of horses that endowed the natives with a new mobility and prowess as buffalo hunters and mounted warriors. Better fed, clothed, and equipped than ever before, the mounted Indians could defy colonial intrusions and even roll back some of their settlements along the margins of the Great Plains. Similarly, the Navajo people of the American southwest became newly rich by appropriating European sheep and looms to their own ends, producing distinctive and beautiful wool cloth. Acquiring horses and firearms, the Navajo also defended their canyons with enhanced vigor and plundered their Indian and Hispanic enemies with a new verve.

Because of their resilience, Indians became indispensable to the European contenders for North American empire. On their contested frontiers, each empire desperately needed Indians as trading partners, guides, religious converts, and military allies. By the late seventeenth century, the imperial contests were primarily struggles to construct networks of Indian allies and to unravel those of rival powers. Indian relations were central to the development of every colonial region.

3

New Spain

1500–1600

A European Catholic vision of the conquest of America as divine duty. Inspired by a vision of the Virgin Mary and the baby Jesus, Spanish conquistadores conquer Indians as an act of revenge on Indians who martyr priests in the act of disrupting the idolatrous worship of the devil. An engraving from Caspar Plautius, Nova Typis Transacta Navigatio *(n.p., 1621).*

The benign consequences of colonization as imagined by a champion of the Spanish empire. The violence of the conquest appears fully justified as priests instruct Indians (who have discarded their weapons) in Christianity and the arts of constructing civilization. While the Indians receive the gospel at their leisure, the priests appear to do all the hard work of construction. European vessels and a fortified colonial town fill in the background. An engraving from Caspar Plautius, Nova Typis Transacta Navigatio *(n.p., 1621).*

DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, the Spanish created the most formidable empire in European history by conquering and colonizing vast stretches of the Americas. By 1550, Spain dominated the lands and peoples around the Caribbean and deep into both North and South America: a domain more than ten times larger than Spain. The approximately twenty million (but shrinking) new Indian subjects dwarfed the seven million Spaniards at home. In extent and population (and cultural diversity), the Spanish empire in the Americas exceeded even the ancient Roman, previously the standard of imperial power. Extolling the Spanish king, a priest exulted, "If the Romans were able to rule the world simply by ruling the Mediterranean, what of the man who rules the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, since they surround the world?"

The sixteenth-century Spanish empire terrified its European rivals, which felt vulnerable to Spanish domination. In both greed and self-defense, the French, Portuguese, English, and Dutch sought American plunder and colonies by robbing the Spanish. To justify their own imperialism, the rival Europeans elaborated upon some very real Spanish atrocities to craft the notorious and persistent "Black Legend": that the Spanish were uniquely cruel and far more brutal and destructive than other Europeans in their treatment of the Indians. In fact, all sixteenth-century European colonizers behaved

with similar arrogance and cruelty, whenever and wherever superior power enabled them to dominate and exploit native peoples. By virtue of their head start in New World exploration, the Spanish simply had a far wider opportunity to conquer greater numbers of Indians at their most vulnerable moment. And on the other side of the coin, in addition to producing consummate conquerors, sixteenth-century Spain provided the earliest and most eloquent critics of colonial violence, especially Bartolomé de Las Casas. But, while steering clear of the Black Legend, we should avoid substituting a "White Legend" that whitewashes the immense human costs exacted by Spanish colonization.

CONQUESTS

At the start of the sixteenth century, as the Taino of Cuba and Hispaniola dwindled from disease and exploitation, the Spanish desperately needed replacements to work their gold mines, cattle ranches, and sugar plantations. To provide new slaves, Spanish military entrepreneurs raided the mainland of Central America, grabbing Indians for profitable sale to the miners and planters of the islands. Because the new slaves proved just as short-lived as the Taino, the demand for slave raiding widened, devastating the native villages around the Gulf of Mexico from Venezuela to Florida and up the Atlantic coast as far as present-day South Carolina.

From their captives, the Spanish learned of the rich and populous Aztec empire in central Mexico, which had cities with stone temples and palaces and an immense population sustained by vast fields of maize, squashes, and beans. The Aztecs exacted tribute and labor from subject peoples over several hundred square miles. The tribute included a steady supply of victims for sacrifice to their gods, for the Aztecs believed that only regular, ritual effusions of blood could maintain the divine favor to sustain their rule and to ensure the life-nourishing crops.

Allured by the reports of great wealth, and appalled by accounts of pagan sacrifices, ambitious Spaniards prepared to invade and conquer the Aztecs. In 1519 the brilliant, ruthless, and charismatic Hernán Cortés led an unauthorized expedition of six hundred armed volunteers from Cuba to the coast of Mexico and into the interior, pushing through the hills to the great central valley. A younger son born into the *hidalgo* class in 1485, Cortés had university training as a lawyer. Frustrated in Spain, he left in 1504 to try his luck in the New World. A subordinate commander in the conquest of Cuba, Cortés acquired plantations, gold mines, and a burning ambition for more power and wealth. Invading the Aztec empire on his own authority, Cortés defied his superior, the governor of Cuba, who wanted the plunder and the conquest for himself.

Alternating brutal force with shrewd diplomacy, Cortés won support

from the native peoples subordinated by the Aztecs. The tributary Indians did not anticipate that the newcomers would eventually prove even more demanding masters than the hated Aztecs. The approach of Cortés's army with its strange new apparatus—cannon, muskets, steel armor, swords, and horses—alarmed the Aztec emperor, Moctezuma. Although there are good grounds to doubt the old legend that Moctezuma mistook Cortés for a returning god, the emperor certainly suspected that the invader possessed some peculiar spiritual prowess. Hoping to buy off the invaders or overawe them with his own supernatural powers, the great Aztec invited the Spanish into the midst of his city as honored guests.

By far the largest city in the Americas, Tenochtitlán occupied a cluster of islands in a large lake. Interwoven with canals, the city reached the mainland by three long and narrow causeways. Fresh water arrived by a stone aqueduct. Most of the whitewashed adobe buildings were small and humble, but some lofty aristocratic houses embraced internal courtyards and gardens. Above all, the Spanish marveled at the immense palace of Moctezuma. Cortés declared, "In Spain there is nothing to compare with it." The city's central plaza of tall stone pyramid-temples also dazzled with a combination of red, blue, and ocher stucco. Dedicated to both Huitzilopochtli, the Aztecs' god of war, and Tlaloc, their god of rain, the largest pyramid stood sixty meters tall. Every year it hosted public ritual human sacrifices of captured people, their chests cut open and their still-beating hearts held up to the sun.

The population of about 200,000 dwarfed the largest city in Spain, Seville, which had only 70,000 inhabitants. Accustomed to the din, clutter, and filth of European cities, Spaniards marveled at the relative cleanliness and order of the Aztec metropolis. The soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo recalled, "These great towns and pyramids and buildings arising from the water, all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadis. Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream."

Instead of humbling the Spanish, the city's wealth inflamed their desire to conquer, plunder, and enslave. They saw justification in the religious idols and human sacrifices that so horrified them. The Spanish quickly turned Moctezuma into a shackled hostage and ultimately a corpse, as they provoked bloody street fighting that, for a time, ousted them from the city. Returning with reinforcements, both Spanish and Indian, Cortés besieged Tenochtitlán. In August 1521, after four months of fighting, the Spanish and their native allies reduced the city to a bloody rubble. Recalling his first, dazzled vision of Tenochtizlán, Díaz del Castillo sadly concluded, "But today all that I then saw is overthrown and destroyed; nothing is left standing." Even greater than the Spanish disappointment was the Aztecs' grief and pain, recalled in their poem:

> Broken spears lie in the roads;
> we have torn our hair in our grief.

The houses are roofless now, and their walls
are red with blood.

Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas,
and the walls are splattered with gore.
The water has turned red, as if it were dyed,
and when we drink it,
it has the taste of brine.

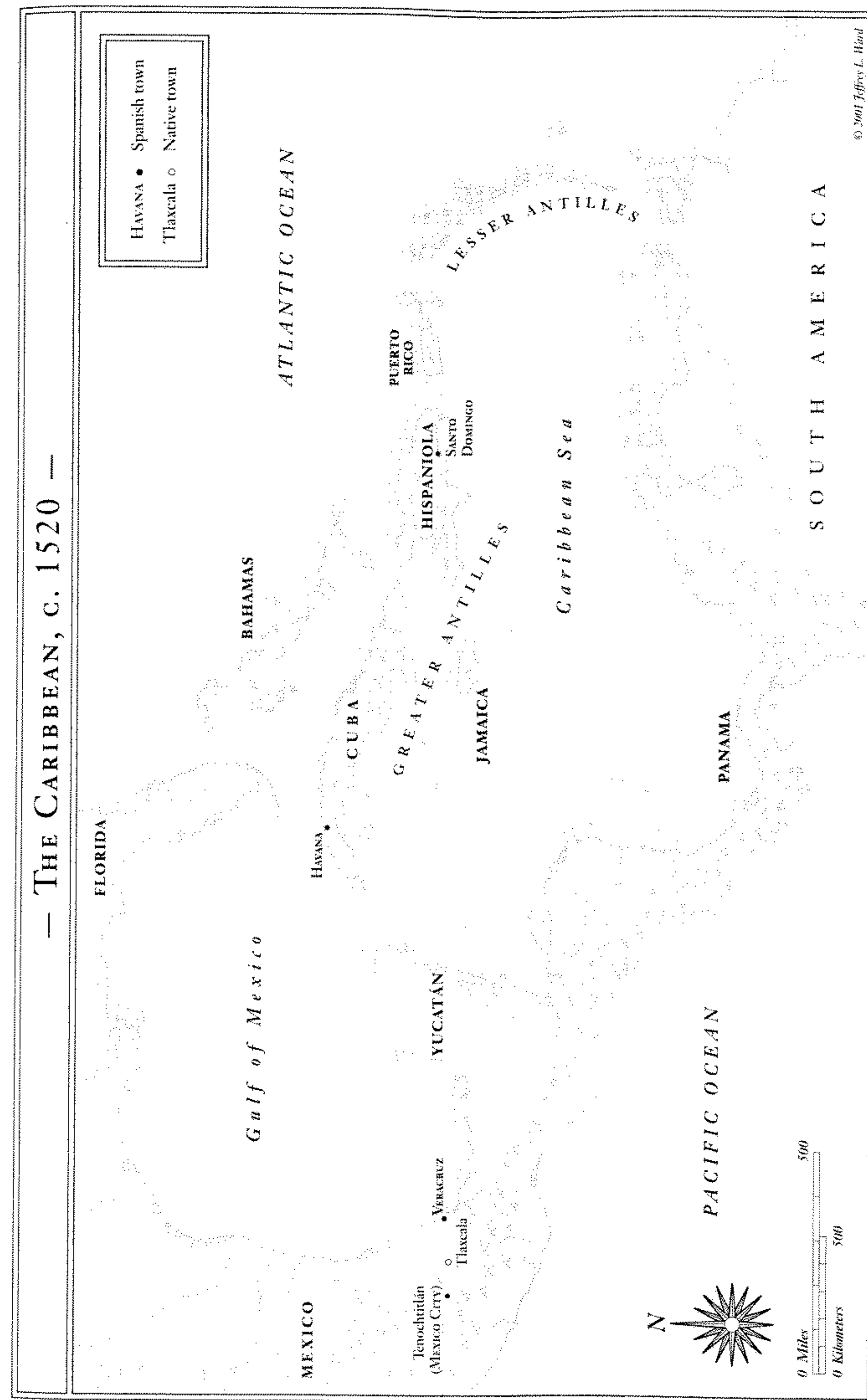
We have pounded our hands in despair
against the adobe walls,
for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.
The shields of our warriors were its defense,
but they could not save it.

Vindictive in victory, the Spanish threw the captured Aztec priests to the war dogs to be torn apart. The victors also tortured Aztec nobles to obtain their hidden gold, later executing many as "traitors" to their new king. Branded on the face or the lip as possessions, thousands of common captives were set to work raising a Spanish capital, Mexico City, on the ruins of their own. The slaves reworked the stones from the great pyramids into a Christian cathedral and the remains of Moctezuma's palace into a residence for Cortés.

As Cortés had cynically anticipated, victory legitimized his unauthorized expedition, conducted in defiance of his superior, the governor of Cuba. Grateful for the stunning conquest and a share in the immense plunder, the Spanish ruler, Carlos V, appointed Cortés to govern Mexico and awarded him a coveted title of high nobility *(marquise)*. By his death in 1547, Cortés ranked as the wealthiest man in Spain, thanks to the revenues from his Mexican estates. As a New World conqueror, he had enjoyed the most spectacular social mobility of his century.

Beginning with Cortés's critical conquest of Mexico, Spain won its great American empire on the mainland between 1519 and 1550. During the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro with a mere 180 men conquered the Inca empire of Peru, practicing a ruthless brutality that might have shamed even Cortés. During the 1540s, Spanish forces gradually and painfully subdued the Mayan peoples of Central America. How could a few hundred Spanish adventurers—known as the conquistadores—so quickly and thoroughly overwhelm such formidable Indian empires?

The conquistadores certainly benefited from the technological superiority of Spanish weaponry. Because sixteenth-century guns, known as arquebuses, were crude, heavy, inaccurate, and slow to reload, only a few conquistadores carried them (Cortés's force of six hundred men had only



thirteen guns). Instead, most relied on steel-edged swords and pikes and crossbows. Although essentially late-medieval, this steel weaponry was far more durable and deadly than the stone-edged swords, axes, and arrows of the natives. And despite the paucity and technical problems of the early firearms, they gave the conquistadores important psychological advantages. The arquebus belched fire and smoke, produced a thunderous roar, and inflicted gaping wounds—all novel and terrifying to Indians. A Spanish priest explained, "God hath caused among the Indians so great a fear of [Spanish soldiers] and their arquebuses that, with only hearing it said that a Spaniard is going to their pueblos, they flee."

Spanish military technology also exploited horses and war dogs (mastiffs), both of which were new and stunning to Indians. Although most conquistadores fought on foot, the few with horses proved especially dreadful to the natives, who had never experienced the shocking power, speed, and height of mounted men wielding swords and lances. "The most essential thing in new lands is horses," observed a conquistador. "They instill the greatest fear in the enemy and make the Indians respect the leaders of the army." To tear into Indian ranks, the Spanish also employed trained attack dogs with deadly effect. Although Indians possessed dogs, they were smaller, less fearsome, and never applied to warfare.

Although important advantages, the technology and animals of European war were not sufficient to overcome the far larger numbers of proud and defiant Indian warriors. But the Spanish evened the odds by finding local allies in subordinated Indian peoples who resented the dominant native people in each region. In the final, victorious assault on Tenochtitlán, most of Cortés's fighters were native auxiliaries.

But the Spaniards' greatest single advantage came from their unintentional and microscopic allies: the pathogens of diseases new to the Indians. Bernal Díaz reported the grim scene in one captured city:

> The streets, the squares, the houses, and the courts of Talteluco were covered with dead bodies: we could not step without treading on them and the stench was intolerable. Accordingly, they (the Indians) were ordered to remove to neighboring towns, and for three days and three nights all the causeways were full, from one end to the other, of men, women, and children, so weak and sickly, squalid and dirty, and pestilential that it was a misery to behold them.

Such weakened people could put up little resistance. The feats of the conquistadores seem superhuman because, in the words of Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., "they were just that—the triumphs of teams that included more than humans."

The epidemics demoralized the survivors. In the Yucatán Peninsula, a Mayan Indian sadly contrasted the new diseases with a better past:

> There was then no sickness; they had no aching bones; they had then no high fever; they had then no smallpox; they had then no burning chest; they had then no abdominal pain; they had then no consumption; they had then no headache. At that time the course of humanity was orderly. The foreigners made it otherwise.

The natives had to wonder if the newcomers did not know some powerful supernatural secret that spread death. Perhaps the safest course was to submit to their rule and their god in the desperate hope of some relief. A stunned acquiescence to the newcomers seized the native peoples most severely afflicted by the new diseases.

At the same time, the conquistadores took heart from the epidemics as a confirmation that God favored their triumph. Bernal Díaz observed, "When the Christians were exhausted from war, God saw fit to send the Indians smallpox, and there was a great pestilence in the city [of Tenochtitlán]." Men who believe in the providential inevitability of their conquest had an immense advantage in combat with a people who felt deserted by their gods.

CONQUISTADORES

The conquistador expeditions were private enterprises led by independent military contractors in pursuit of profit. The commander ordinarily obtained a license from the crown, which reserved a fifth of the plunder and claimed sovereign jurisdiction over any conquered lands. Known as an *adelantado*, the holder of a crown license recruited and financed his own expedition, with the help of investors who expected shares in the plunder. Developed in the course of the *reconquista* and applied to the Canaries, the *adelantado* system reflected the crown's chronic shortage of men and money.

Cortés and the other officers came from the Spanish gentry—the *hidalgos*—rather than the upper nobility, while the rank-and-file soldiers were restless young single men from the commercial towns and middle ranks of Spanish society. Receiving no wages, they fought on speculation, gambling for a big share in plunder and slaves. In the meantime, they had to supply their own weapons and provisions, often by borrowing money from investors, who expected a share in their booty. At the end of an expedition, every member, after collecting his share and paying his debts, was free to retire or to embark on a new expedition.

In addition to reaping plunder and slaves, the victorious commanders obtained tribute paid annually by conquered Indian villages. Grants known as *encomiendas* endowed the holder, the *encomendero*, with a share in the forced labor and annual produce of the inhabitants of several Indian pueblos (villages). In the largest, Cortés appropriated tribute from 23,000 families, the entire population of the large and fertile valley of Oaxaca. As quasi-feudal

lords, *encomenderos* were supposed to defend the inhabitants against other Indians and to promote their conversion to Christianity by supporting a priest and building a church. Because only superior officers obtained *encomiendas*, ambitious subordinates longed for higher command in some new expedition in search of their own Aztec empire. Such dissatisfied adventurers expanded the frontiers of conquest, into northern Mexico and beyond to the Rio Grande.

Greed was a prerequisite for pursuing the hard life of a conquistador. Cortés meant to be disingenuous when he assured the Aztecs, "I and my companions suffer from a disease of the heart which can be cured only with gold." Of course, he was more profoundly right than he realized. According to the Aztecs, when given presents by Moctezuma, the Spanish "picked up the gold and fingered it like monkeys; they seemed to be transported by joy, as if their hearts were illumined and made new. . . . Their bodies swelled with greed, and their hunger was ravenous. They hungered like pigs for that gold."

But the conquistadores held that their greed served other, nobler motives: to extend the realm of their monarch and to expand the church of their God. They reasoned that riches were wasted on pagans and more properly bestowed upon Christian subjects of the Spanish king. Bernal Díaz concisely summarized his motives as "to serve God and His Majesty, to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do."

The conquistadores regarded plunder, slaves, and tribute as the just deserts for men who forced pagans to accept Christianity and Spanish rule. After all, the conquistadores scrupulously adhered to the Spanish law of conquest by reading the *requerimiento*, which ordered defiant Indians immediately to accept Spanish rule and Christian conversion. If the Indians ignored this order, they deserved the harsh punishments of a "just war." The *requerimiento* announced, "The resultant deaths and damages shall be your fault, and not the monarch's or mine or the soldiers." Attending witnesses and a notary certified in writing that the *requerimiento* had been read and ignored, justifying all the deaths and destruction that followed. The cruel absurdity of reading the *requerimiento* in a language alien to Indians was apparent to many Spanish priests if not to the conquistadores.

Proud and prickly men, the conquistadores ultimately lusted for power over others that they might escape dependence upon a superior. This was an especially alluring dream in European societies premised upon a strict hierarchy of power that obliged almost everyone to submit to a superior. A Franciscan friar in New Spain observed, "All the Spaniards, even the most miserable and unfortunate, want to be señores and live for themselves, not as servants of anyone, but with servants of their own."

CONSOLIDATION

The dream of autonomy through power over Indians soon brought the conquistadores into conflict with the Spanish crown. Imperial officials feared that the *encomenderos* meant to rule New Spain with a high hand, giving only token allegiance to their sovereign. Having expended considerable blood and treasure at home to subdue the great lords of Spain, the crown was not about to tolerate the emergence of a new feudal aristocracy overseas. With good cause, the monarchs also worried that the conquistadores killed or enslaved too many Indians, who might otherwise have become Christian converts and taxpaying subjects.

The Spanish crown longed to consolidate an empire in a New World where almost everything was in violent flux. Ruthless, tireless, and resourceful soldiers, the conquistadores were abysmal administrators ill suited to govern their gains. Their smash-and-grab victories were no guarantee of enduring loyalty and substantial revenue from the conquered Indians. Indeed, Spanish greed, violence, and diseases depopulated and disrupted native communities that the crown wanted to stabilize, control, and tax—and that missionaries sought to convert and manage. Crushing native rulers was but the first, modest step in a true conquest, which required remaking the native culture, introducing Spanish institutions, and integrating the new lands and peoples into the transatlantic rule and commerce of Spain.

Appalled by the violence practiced by the conquistadores, the missionary friars argued that peaceful persuasion would more certainly convert the natives to Christianity and Hispanic civilization. This argument originated on Hispaniola in 1511 when a Dominican friar outraged his congregation by demanding: "Are these Indians not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as you love yourselves?" The sermon did profoundly touch one *encomendero* in the congregation, Bartolomé de Las Casas, who renounced his *encomienda*, entered the Dominican order, and became the most eloquent and vociferous critic of the American conquest.

Although less exploitative than the *encomenderos*, the friars offered the Indians a demanding alternative: that they entirely surrender their traditional cultures to adopt, instead, the strange and uncompromising ways and beliefs of their conquerors. Priests oversaw the destruction of native temples, prohibited most traditional dances, and obliged natives to build new churches and adopt the rituals of the Catholic faith. Many Indians adopted the new faith with apparent enthusiasm but continued to venerate their old idols in secret.

To sustain a measure of psychological autonomy, Mexican Indians privately nurtured a mythic understanding of the Spanish conquest as cosmically insignificant and ephemeral: of no more enduring significance than the many previous cycles of rising and falling native powers. Having experienced

the Aztecs, and the Toltecs before them, the natives of Mexico expected to outlast their Spanish masters. From our own vantage point on the radical transformation of Indian lives under the onslaught of colonization, this native myth seems far from "true." But the Indians preserved much of their own cultural identity within that transformation, rendering the myth real in their thoughts.

Because of the internal nature of native resistance, the friars could achieve no more than a compromise in matters of faith and practice. They ultimately had to tolerate a vibrant religious syncretism in which the new Catholic forms absorbed native content. The cult of the Virgin assumed a special importance as it came to resemble the former celebration of the maternal spirits of the maize, the "corn mothers."

During the 1530s the leading conquistadores either died fighting one another over the spoils of conquest, as did Pizarro in Peru, or were forced into retirement by the crown, which was the fate of Cortés in 1535. Although displaced from command, the surviving *encomenderos* usually retained their *encomienda* rights and persisted as a wealthy and influential local elite. Administration of the colonies passed to lawyers, bureaucrats, and clerics.

Responding to the missionaries' complaints, the Spanish crown also enacted reform legislation meant to protect the Indians from the most extreme forms of *encomendero* exploitation. But these reforms were indifferently enforced by colonial officials, who balked at angering the *encomendero* class. The officials also understood that the king did not expect humanitarianism to interfere with the homeward flow of his American revenues, which ultimately depended upon keeping the Indians at work on estates, in mines, and in urban workshops.

Labor conscription concentrated overworked Indians in unsanitary camps and urban *barrios*, increasing their exposure to infectious diseases and weakening their resistance. And hunger afflicted the Indians who remained in their rural villages as ranging and voracious cattle, pigs, and sheep invaded their fields, consuming the crops. Exceeding the carrying capacity of the land, the introduced herds of new livestock also provoked widespread erosion and even desiccation, to the detriment of native hunting, gathering, and irrigation.

Hungry, overworked, and dislocated, the natives of Mexico were especially vulnerable to disease. The native population dwindled from a preconquest ten million natives to about one million by 1620. As the Indians dwindled, Spanish enterprises seized direct ownership of the land in Mexico. To reward their friends and reap fees, the viceroys granted large rural estates, known as *haciendas*, to wealthy colonists. Most of the surviving Indians labored for wages or crop shares on the *haciendas*, which, during the seventeenth century, supplanted the *encomiendas* as the chief institution for exploiting the land and people of rural Mexico.

COLONISTS

During the sixteenth century, the New World drew about 250,000 Spanish emigrants to the Americas. Most originated in Castile and emigrated through the port of Seville, which monopolized Spanish trade to the Americas. All social classes participated, but people of middling property, especially skilled artisans from the market towns, predominated. Both push and pull motivated their movement. Fearing a decline into poverty if they remained in Spain, ambitious but middling folk looked to New Spain for opportunities to get ahead. In 1564 the tailor Diego de San Lorente exhorted his wife to join him in Mexico: "Here we can live according to our pleasure, and you will be very contented, and with you beside me I shall soon be rich."

If she did join him, the tailor was unusually fortunate. Early in the sixteenth century almost all the emigrants were young single men, for the dangers and hardships of transatlantic emigration deterred women. By the 1570s the number of emigrant women had increased but remained less than a third of the total. As a result, the male emigrants usually took wives and concubines among the Indians, producing mixed offspring known as mestizos. Proliferating and intermarrying over the generations, the mestizos became a middling caste especially numerous in the cities and towns of New Spain, eclipsing Mexico's purely Indian population by the start of the eighteenth century. In the tropical lowlands of the Caribbean coast, the Indians were replaced primarily by imported African slaves and their offspring, including mulattoes sired by Hispanic masters.

The increasing racial and cultural complexity of New Spain challenged the stark and simple dualities of the conquest: Spaniard and Indian, Christian and pagan, conqueror and conquered. In place of the old polarities, the colonial authorities developed a complex new racial hierarchy known as the *castas*, which ranked people from the pure African and Indian at the bottom through multiple gradations of mixture to the pure Spaniard imagined at the pinnacle. The higher *castas* enjoyed greater legal privileges at the expense of the lower.

Of all the European empires in the Americas, the Spanish developed the largest number of urban centers and the greatest density of cosmopolitan institutions. By 1574 the Spanish had chartered 121 towns in the Americas, and another 210 followed by 1628. Modeled on Spanish precedents, the charters entrusted local power to *cabildos:* town councils composed of self-perpetuating oligarchies derived from the wealthiest and most prestigious citizens. Carefully planned, the towns possessed a spacious gridiron pattern of streets with the public buildings—principally a town hall and a church—arranged around a central plaza. The families of the wealthiest citizens, including the members of the *cabildo*, dwelled near the central plaza, with the

people of lower status and lesser property (and darker complexion) living on the peripheries.

EMPIRE

At mid-century, Mexico and Peru became the two great centers of the Spanish empire, eclipsing the older Spanish colonies in the Caribbean. Larger in size, richer in minerals, and retaining larger Indian populations than the island colonies, Mexico and Peru attracted most of the Spanish capital and emigrants sent to the New World after 1525. Cuba and Hispaniola diminished in importance to way stations between Spain and the two great American mainland colonies of the empire.

The Spanish crown divided the American empire into two immense administrative regions, known as viceroyalties, each governed primarily by a viceroy appointed by the king. In the mid-sixteenth century the viceroyalty of New Spain consisted of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean islands, while the viceroyalty of Peru included all of South America except Portuguese Brazil. Ever fearful of losing control over the rich and distant empire, the Spanish crown structured colonial authority to prevent the viceroys from accumulating too much power. In particular, the crown established a council known as an *audiencia*. Combining the functions of legislature, executive cabinet, and supreme court, the *audiencia* drafted laws, advised the viceroy, and conducted major trials. Unlike the later English colonies, the viceroyalties had no elective assemblies; the Spanish permitted none in their New World. Each viceroyalty also had an archbishop appointed by the monarch (by subcontract from the pope) to supervise the clergy, convents, and churches. As a further check on the viceroy, *audiencias*, and archbishop, the crown periodically subjected all three to a probing audit and investigation known as a *visita* conducted by special deputies sent from Spain. One investigative report on a viceroy of Peru ran to 49,555 pages.

The leaders of both the archbishopric and the *audiencia* were, like the viceroys, proud and ambitious aristocrats jealous of their privileges and perquisites. Inevitably, they sparred over their proper shares of colonial wealth and power. Although fatal to administrative efficiency, the frictions perpetuated the ultimate control of the monarchy in distant Madrid. Competing vigorously for the crown's favor, all three sets of leaders reported (or invented) the malfeasance of their rivals. The empire became clogged with paperwork as the clashing interests generated reams of reports and counterreports that encouraged almost endless dispute and indecision. Multiple appeals and counterappeals from rival officials delayed action for years, often till long after the protagonists had died.

The immense size of the American empire, its distance from Spain, and the crown's obsession with control combined to render Spanish colonial administration highly bureaucratic, inefficient, and slow. Distrusting its colonial officials, the crown reserved authority over all important decisions and many minor ones. Unfortunately, any colonial request for crown instructions required at least a year for an answer, given the slow pace of transatlantic shipping and the bureaucratic inertia in Spain. One despairing viceroy complained, "If death came from Madrid, we should all live to a very old age."

On the other hand, the complex system also enabled colonial authorities to delay or frustrate any especially distasteful order from the crown. In the cynical phrase of their time, the officials resolved to "observe but not obey" any dictates that seemed unrealistic or inconvenient. Although all-pervasive, the imperial state was not all-powerful. The Spanish crown affected every aspect of public life in the colonies, but the monarchy could never achieve its aspirations to total control.

GOLD AND SILVER

At its core in central Mexico and Peru, the Spanish empire was phenomenally rich, especially in the mining of precious metals. Between 1500 and 1650 the Spanish shipped from America to Europe about 181 tons of gold and 16,000 tons of silver. The bullion primarily paid private debts for imported goods, but a fifth went in tax to the crown. By 1585 American bullion amounted to 25 percent of the crown's total revenue. The acquisition of so much gold and silver rescued the Spanish (and by extension, all of Europe) from their previous imbalance of trade with Asia, enabling the purchase of unprecedented quantities of Far Eastern spices and cloth.

But the gold and silver sent homeward was a mixed blessing. The infusion expanded the money supply faster than the growth of goods and services, contributing to a dramatic inflation of prices that spilled over into the rest of Europe. After the relative price stability of the fifteenth century, Europeans experienced a fivefold rise in prices during the sixteenth century. Laboring people especially suffered from the inflation, because the cost of living rose faster than their wages. In Spain, the real value of wages, relative to prices, declined by a fifth. The American bullion may have made the Spanish nation rich, in the aggregate, but it worsened the already hard lot of the peasants and laborers—together the great majority of the population.

The American bullion also weakened manufacturing in Spain, by inflating the prices of Spanish-made goods. This encouraged cheaper imports from the rest of Europe while rendering Spanish manufactures too expensive to compete in export markets. The Spanish loss benefited manufacturers elsewhere in Europe, especially the Dutch, who increased their exports to Spain. Offering little attraction to investors, Spanish manufacturing lagged behind the rest of western Europe in quantity, quality, and technological innovation. That lag would, in turn, greatly weaken the Spanish empire in the

Americas, as Indian and Hispanic consumers increasingly turned to Dutch, English, and French traders to procure cloth and metal goods.

The gold and silver revenue also encouraged the crown to pursue an aggressive and costly policy of military intervention in North Africa, Italy, and the Netherlands. Drained by foreign wars, the Spanish military and economy decayed dramatically during the seventeenth century. Before that unexpected decline, however, neither the Spanish nor their many enemies could see the ruinous consequences of the American gold and silver.

The sixteenth-century rulers of Spain felt entrusted with a divine mission to convert and command the peoples of the world. These convictions rendered Spanish policy uncompromising, especially during the long reign of King Philip II (1556–98). A devout and rigid Catholic, Philip regarded Protestantism as a rank heresy, which he meant to destroy. In 1573 the king assured a military commander, "You are engaged in God's service and in mine—which is the same thing." Emboldened by the easy destruction of Indian empires, Philip treated European opponents with contempt. In 1570 he announced, "These Italians, although they are not Indians, have to be treated as such, so that they will understand that we are in charge of them and not they in charge of us." This attitude understandably alarmed other Europeans, who read with grim interest the lurid accounts of Spanish atrocities in the New World.

European alarm grew in 1580–81, when Spanish power seemed to make another quantum leap as Philip completed the unification of the Iberian Peninsula by adding Portugal to his realm. The union also combined the far-flung and wealthy Portuguese colonies with the already immense Spanish empire. Those colonial acquisitions included the Atlantic islands of the Azores and Madeiras, the wealthy sugar colony of Brazil in South America, and lucrative entrepots on the coasts of Africa, India, and the East Indies: the sources of valuable slaves and spices.

Without their own share in the overseas riches, other Europeans dreaded that they would fall under domination by Spain. The greatest English promoter of overseas expansion, Sir Walter Ralegh, warned of the Spanish king: "It is his Indian Gold that . . . endangereth and disturbeth all the nations of Europe."

The quickest way to obtain American wealth was to steal it on the high seas after the Spanish had conveniently mined and packaged the gold and silver and loaded it onto ships. Lacking substantial navies, the Dutch, English, and French encouraged private investors to send armed ships to attack and plunder the Spanish shipping. In 1523 much of the gold stolen by Cortés from the Aztecs and shipped homeward was restolen by French pirates in the Atlantic. During the 1550s, French pirates extended their raids into the Caribbean, capturing, plundering, and burning Havana, the great port of Cuba.

In response, the Spanish organized a grand annual convoy of sixty to seventy large ships protected by a royal fleet. No longer relying upon the small, lightly armed caravels of the late fifteenth century, the Spanish had developed large vessels known as galleons, each studded with heavy cannon. Drawn from Veracruz and Panama and laden with the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru, the return convoy gathered at Havana for the run home via the Gulf Stream during the early autumn. Although the convoy system enabled the shipping to get through, the cargoes were heavily taxed to recoup the high costs.

The expense of the official convoy trade—and the long intervals between the arrivals of shipments in the New World—put Spanish merchants at a disadvantage. They faced increasing competition from foreign interlopers who, as smugglers, garnered a growing share of the Hispanic market in the Americas. Because the smugglers paid no Spanish taxes and obeyed no Spanish convoy regulations, they could more readily and cheaply provide manufactured goods to Hispanic consumers in the Americas. Often the smugglers were the pirates in another guise.

During the 1580s and 1590s, the English succeeded the French as the leading predators upon the ships and seaports of New Spain. The greatest English mariner, Francis Drake, ravaged the Caribbean coast and even broke into the Pacific Ocean to devastate Spanish shipping along the Peruvian and Mexican coasts, before heading west to circumnavigate the globe. These bold raids endeared Drake to the English monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, who took a cut of his profits and rewarded him with a knighthood. His patron, Sir Walter Ralegh, said that Drake was more than a pirate because of the immense scale of his theft: "Did you ever knowe of any that were pyratts for millions? Only they that risk for small things are pyratts."

English piracy and aid for Protestant rebels in the Netherlands infuriated King Philip II. In 1588 he sent an armada of warships to seize control of the English Channel and so permit an invasion of England by the Spanish troops posted in the Netherlands. When a subordinate warned of dangerous storms, the king serenely replied, "We are fully aware of the risk . . . but . . . since it is all for His cause, God will send good weather." The Armada consisted of 130 warships carrying 2,431 cannon and 22,000 sailors and soldiers. The English warships were fewer and smaller but also faster, more mobile, and mounted with longer-range cannon. They broke up the Armada, which in retreat homeward was battered by storms in the North Sea and Irish Sea that destroyed or crippled most of the Spanish vessels.

The debacle saved England from invasion and wounded Spanish prestige, which emboldened the English to escalate their maritime predation. Unable to invade England, Spain had to settle for bolstering its defenses in New Spain by constructing immense and expensive stone fortifications to guard the major seaports. Although effective in frustrating pirate attack, these expenditures consumed much of the American bullion, reducing the share shipped homeward. In 1620, Spanish crown receipts of American silver fell

to less than a third of their 1590s level, producing a financial crisis. In 1631 the Spanish king's prime minister vented his frustration aloud at a cabinet meeting, wondering whether the burdens of American empire had not "reduced this monarchy to such a miserable state that it might fairly be said that it would have been more powerful without the New World."

Possessing no such doubts, the French, Dutch, and English escalated their attempts to construct their own empires in the Americas. The rival nations gradually recognized that raiding was only a hit-or-miss means to capture the benefits of overseas empire. To obtain a more regular and predictable flow of wealth, the European rivals needed their own colonies, where they might harvest precious minerals and tropical and semitropical crops—sugar, cacao, and tobacco—that had a high market value because they would not grow in temperate Europe.

However, it was not easy to shift from state-sponsored piracy to the development of mining and plantation colonies. On the one hand, the profits of piracy stimulated shipbuilding, improved naval technology, and trained mariners in transatlantic navigation. On the other hand, piracy soaked up ships and investment capital, to the detriment of other overseas enterprises that required more time to become profitable.

The rival empires could acquire colonies by seizing them from the Spanish, but this was dangerous and expensive. An alternative approach was slower but safer: to find some American coast unsettled by the Spanish for colonial settlement. During the sixteenth century, English, French, and Dutch mariners probed the unguarded Atlantic seaboard of North America seeking bases for both piracy and plantations. Those probes alarmed the Spanish, reigniting their interest in exploring and colonizing the vast mainland north of the Gulf of Mexico to fend off their enemies.

4

The Spanish Frontier

1530–1700

The burial ceremonies for a Timucuan chief in Florida. The bereaved people gather around a grave demarcated by the chief's arrows and surmounted by the shell he used as a drinking cup. The women have cropped their hair short in mourning, and in the lower left a warrior is about to have his head shorn. In the background the chief's temple and house, within the palisade, have been set ablaze to mark the break in village leadership. From Johann Theodor de Bry, Great Voyages *(Frankfurt, 1590).*

SPANISH EXPANSION SLOWED beyond the core regions of central Mexico and Peru, where sedentary agriculture and large, permanent native villages prevailed. Because conquistadores lived as parasites off the native produce of the invaded regions, they could not linger where the Indians did not practice horticulture. Fields of maize attracted conquistadores, and their absence deterred them. On the frontiers, the Spanish also faced more effective resistance from more dispersed, more mobile, and less prosperous Indians, like the Chichimeca of northern Mexico. Indeed, the nomadic Indians adapted to the colonial intrusion by raiding isolated mining camps, ranches, and mule trains to obtain animals, captives, provisions, and weapons. The horticultural Indians of the core were the foundation of the Hispanic empire, but the nomadic Indians of the peripheries were formidable obstacles to further expansion. Lacking maize, cities, and gold, the Indians of the peripheries seemed hardly worth the greater effort needed to conquer them.

The Spanish, however, persistently hoped that other core regions of civilized, rich, and vulnerable Indians lurked out in the great beyond. After all, Cortés had penetrated a relatively impoverished coastal district to conquer the wealthy and populous Aztec empire. His phenomenal success inspired emulators primed to believe the most glowing rumors of greater riches and wondrous sights just beyond the northern frontier of New Spain. Interest in northern expeditions especially soared after the 1536 return of a long-lost traveler named Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.

CABEZA DE VACA

In March of 1536, Spanish slave raiders in northwestern Mexico were surprised to find three Spaniards and a Moorish slave all dressed as Indians and accompanied by nearly six hundred natives. The leader among the four, Cabeza de Vaca, noted that the slave raiders were "thunderstruck to see me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians. They went on staring at me for a long space of time, so astonished that they could neither speak to me nor manage to ask me anything." About forty-five years old, Cabeza de Vaca had been missing for eight years. He and his companions had trekked across much of North America, from the swamps of Florida to the coast of Texas and then through the deserts, mountains, and valleys of northern Mexico. Along the way, Cabeza de Vaca endured a searing double transformation, first from conquistador to slave, and then from slave to sacred healer.

His long, hard journey had begun in 1528 on Tampa Bay in Florida, as the second-in-command over an expedition of three hundred conquistadores. His superior, Panfilo de Narváez, was an unfortunate incompetent who had lost an eye in a failed attempt to wrest Mexico away from Cortés. Pressing into the northern interior of Florida, the conquistadores found little gold but many debilitating attacks from the Apalachee Indians. Retreating to

the coast, the Spanish constructed five barges to attempt an escape by coasting around the Gulf of Mexico, but the barges broke apart off the coast of Texas, drowning most of the men, including Narváez. The shipwreck stripped the survivors of their intimidating apparatus as conquistadores: their horses, gunpowder, and steel armor and weapons. Most of the remaining Spanish soon died of disease, exposure, and malnutrition. The surviving few became scattered among several Karankawa Indian bands, where they suffered hunger and hard labor. In a reversal of roles, Spaniards, who had come to enslave, became instead the slaves of the Karankawa.

The last four survivors included Cabeza de Vaca and a black Moorish slave named Esteban. Although lacking in medical training, they reluctantly became magical healers at the Indians' insistence. The natives apparently assumed that only the Spaniards possessed the power to cure the deadly new illnesses associated with their arrival. Cabeza de Vaca explained, "The way in which we cured was by making the sign of the cross over them and blowing on them and reciting a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria; and then we prayed as best we could to God Our Lord to give them health and inspire them to give us good treatment." Most of their patients recovered, and the four became honored men among their native hosts.

Both the natives and the Spaniards interpreted the cures as effected by supernatural power, but they differed over whether that power came from within the healers or derived from a distant God. The natives regarded the four men as especially potent shamans who could magically manipulate the supernatural. But Cabeza de Vaca insisted upon a Catholic explanation: the healers were passive conduits for the power of their God, who chose to save them from the Indians. In contrast to both of those sixteenth-century peoples, we seek a "rational" explanation: perhaps that the power of suggestion effected cures without magic or divine intervention. The passage of nearly five centuries has rendered the sixteenth-century peoples even more culturally alien from us than they were to one another.

In the fall of 1534 it was the Indians' explanation for the cures that set the four men free and in motion homeward. Word of their cures empowered the particular band that hosted them; in return for food and other gifts, one band passed the healers on to the next. In this fashion, the four men moved westward across south Texas and New Mexico into northwestern Mexico, passing through diverse native peoples now labeled Coahuiltecan, Jumano, Concho, Pima, and Opata. Those dwelling in arid south Texas led an often harsh existence as seasonally migratory hunter-gatherers, but in northwestern Mexico the four sojourners found more permanent adobe pueblos and productive fields of maize.

Unfortunately, these impressive villages were under devastating attack from slave-raiding conquistadores. Cabeza de Vaca recalled, "It made us extremely sad to see how fertile the land was, and very beautiful, and very full of springs and rivers, and to see every place deserted and burned, and the

people so thin and ill, all of them fled and hidden." He was especially horrified when the commanding conquistador proposed enslaving the Indians who had guided the four travelers. The commander desisted only reluctantly and after a heated confrontation with the four sojourners, who refused to betray their benefactors.

In narrating his confrontation with the slavers, Cabeza de Vaca expressed a new perspective more like that of a friar who had taken a vow of poverty: "We healed the sick, they killed the sound; we came naked and barefoot, they clothed, horsed, and lanced; we coveted nothing but gave whatever we were given, while they robbed whomever they found." The "they" described his own past as well as the immediate slavers, for in them he saw what he had been eight years before in Florida with a sword in hand, destroying Apalachee villages.

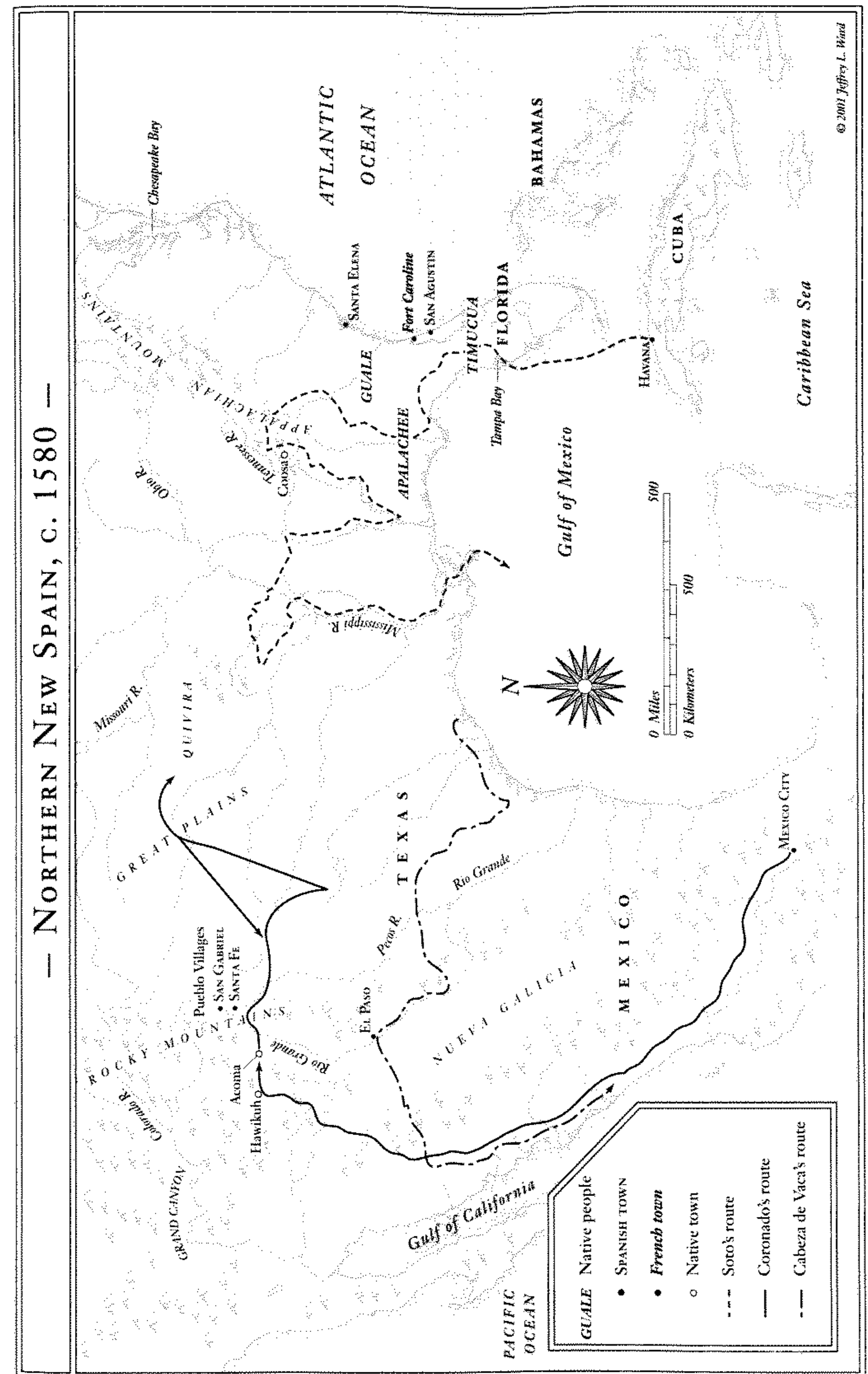
Cabeza de Vaca's long, harsh, and unsettling experience had chastened and transformed the former conquistador. Stripped of the power to coerce Indians, he had to learn their ways to survive. Deprived of his shell, psychological as well as physical, as a conquistador, Cabeza de Vaca obtained an unprecedented insight into the complex cultures of his Indian hosts. Once back among the Spanish, he struggled to readjust. At first he could neither abide European clothing nor sleep on a bed, preferring the floor.

But Cabeza de Vaca had to reenter a society that valued what he had learned only as a means to further conquest. Still ultimately committed to the Catholic faith and Hispanic civilization, he hoped to reconcile their triumph with his new empathy for Indians. In his report to the Spanish crown, Cabeza de Vaca preached a policy of pacification, more akin to Las Casas than to Cortés: "All these [native] people, if they are to be brought to be Christians and into obedience of Your Imperial Majesty, must be led by good treatment, and . . . this is a very sure way, and no other will suffice."

Cabeza de Vaca helped shift official Spanish policy away from unregulated conquest toward a greater emphasis on winning a measure of native consent. The Spanish continued, ultimately, to rely on their military might for expansion, but the crown insisted that commanders minimize Indian casualties and avoid enslaving natives. The monarchy also paid for missionary friars to accompany and advise the conquistadores. This shift in emphasis from conquest to "pacification," however, was slow and incomplete, especially in the expeditions immediately inspired by Cabeza de Vaca's return.

SOTO

Although Cabeza de Vaca reported little or no precious metals among his hosts, he vaguely referred to rumors of richer peoples to their north. That sufficed to arouse the aspiring conquistadores of New Spain, who gave to his report an imaginative gloss that reflected their own fantasies. Surely, they



reasoned, other native empires, as rich as the Aztecs, must exist farther north, just beyond the route of the four sojourners.

During the years 1539–43, Vaca's report inspired two great conquistador expeditions northward. From Cuba, Hernando de Soto led the first to Florida and through what is now the American southeast. From Mexico, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado marched the second expedition into and across the American southwest to the Great Plains. Although officially instructed to practice restraint, Soto and Coronado instead unleashed waves of violence, destruction, and disease that devastated the native peoples in their way. And all to no avail, for neither found another Tenochtitlán. Instead, their expensive failures set northern limits to the Spanish empire by limiting further expeditions.

Soto had reaped a fortune as a subordinate officer in the conquests of Central America and Peru. He had also developed a streak of sadism, for a comrade reported that Soto was "much given to the sport of hunting Indians on horseback." Like so many of the conquistadores, Soto was an inveterate gambler unable to retire on the substantial fruits of his previous expeditions. Instead, ambition drove him to seek more, to outdo even Cortés. Undaunted by the disastrous Narváez expedition, Soto imagined that the interior north of Florida contained his own golden equivalent of the Aztec empire.

Beginning in the spring of 1539, Soto led six hundred men on a violent rampage through the carefully cultivated and densely populated heartland of the Mississippian culture. The conquistadores traversed present-day Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and east Texas. In 1541, Soto found and crossed the Mississippi, the greatest river in the continent. His men ventured west as far as the Great Plains, coming within three hundred miles of Coronado's expedition. Indeed, Soto's men captured an especially unfortunate Pueblo Indian woman who had recently escaped from the clutches of Coronado's men. Confronted by Soto's demanding, violent, and powerful men, the Mississippians alternated between bitter resistance and grudging cooperation, in the hope that one or the other would send the Spaniards quickly on their way elsewhere.

Soto's men carried little food, expecting instead to take maize, beans, and squash from the Indians. The unexpected arrival of hundreds of voracious Spaniards represented a catastrophic tax on the food supply of a Mississippian town. Soto also brought along three hundred sets of iron collars and chains to enslave Indians to serve as porters. Upon reaching a chiefdom, Soto seized local chiefs as hostages to extort a ransom of maize, women, porters, and guides. When faced with the slightest resistance, Soto employed terror tactics to intimidate the survivors. Some Indians suffered the loss of a nose or a hand; others were thrown to the war dogs or burned alive. Archaeologists excavating the sites of villages visited by Soto have found many Indian skeletons scarred by steel weapons.

In the Mississippian villages, the conquistadores detected the cues that

they thought indicated sure wealth. Like the Aztecs, the Mississippians possessed large fields of abundant crops, ceremonial centers featuring temple mounds and substantial populations, and powerful chiefs able to mobilize hundreds of warriors. But nowhere could the Spanish find gold or silver in any quantities, despite widespread pillaging of villages and graves and the torture of Indian informants. Frustrated, and feeling betrayed, the conquistadores left a trail of corpses, mutilations, ravaged fields, emptied storehouses, and charred towns.

In May of 1542, Soto sickened and died on the banks of the Mississippi, leaving the command to Luis de Moscoso. When the local Indians suspiciously asked where Soto had gone, Moscoso replied that he had ascended into the sky. In fact, with a ballast of sand, Soto had been surreptitiously cast into the Mississippi River to hide his mortality from the Indians. The humanitarian friar Bartolomé de Las Casas observed, "We do not doubt but that he was buried in hell . . . for such wickedness." In 1543 the conquistadores gave up and fled, building boats to descend the Mississippi and sail southwest along the Gulf Coast. About half of the original force survived to reach Mexico in September of 1543.

The Mississippians were not so lucky. The Soto expedition introduced diseases that decimated the natives. Death and misery spread throughout the great valley as Indian travelers, traders, and refugees carried the diseases to distant natives who had never directly encountered Soto's men. Because epidemics disseminate most easily among dense settlements, the Mississippian towns were deathtraps. By 1600, the region's population had collapsed to a small fraction of its former numbers.

When French explorers first visited the Mississippi Valley during the 1670s, they found relatively few Indians. In an area of southern Arkansas and northeastern Louisiana where Soto had counted thirty substantial towns, the French noted only five small villages. On the upper Coosa River of Georgia and Alabama, the setting for a populous and powerful chiefdom encountered by Soto, archaeologists have found five townsites dating from the early sixteenth century but only one from the end of the century.

The population collapse devastated the Mississippian culture. Dreading both the disease and the uneasy spirits of the many dead, the survivors abandoned the great towns and dispersed into the hilly hinterland. As their societies shrank and relocated, they became less complex, diminishing the power of the chiefs. In most places there were simply no longer enough people to raise the agricultural tribute necessary to sustain a costly and elaborate elite. And the survivors must have lost faith in their ruling chiefs and priests, who had failed to stop the waves of death.

The demographic and cultural disaster profoundly disrupted the geography of power in the Mississippi watershed. At the time of Soto's expedition, the densely settled villages of the powerful chiefdoms occupied the fertile valleys. Poorer and weaker peoples dwelled in small, scattered villages in the

less fertile hills, where they lacked the means to sustain a centralized chiefdom. After Soto's invasion and epidemics, the hill peoples became comparatively powerful as the valley chiefdoms collapsed. Indeed, the dispersed hill peoples suffered less severely from the microbes that fed most destructively on the human concentrations in the lowland towns. And the upland peoples absorbed refugees fleeing from the valleys to escape the epidemics.

In the depopulated valleys, forests and wildlife gradually reclaimed the abandoned maize and bean fields, while the refugees farmed the less fertile but safer hills. The resurgent wildlife included bison, common in the southeast by 1700 but never sighted by Soto's conquistadores 160 years before. Far from timeless, the southeastern forest of the eighteenth century was wrought by the destructive power of a sixteenth-century European expedition. Soto had created an illusion of a perpetual wilderness where once there had been a populous and complex civilization.

By 1700, the paramount chiefdoms encountered by Soto had collapsed, with one exception: the Natchez people dwelling along the lower Mississippi River. Elsewhere, the paramount chiefdoms gave way to loose new confederations of smaller and more autonomous villages. The new chiefs possessed little coercive power; their people built them no pyramids; and their graves contained no human sacrifices. Eighteenth-century colonists called the principal confederacies the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Cherokee.

The new confederations exemplified the widespread process of colonial "ethnogenesis"—the emergence of new ethnic groups and identities from the consolidation of many peoples disrupted by the invasion of European peoples, animals, and microbes. Scholars used to assume that nineteenth-century Indian nations were direct and intact survivors from time immemorial in their homelands. In fact, after 1700 most North American Indian "tribes" were relatively new composite groups formed by diverse refugees coping with the massive epidemics and collective violence introduced by colonization.

CORONADO

Cabeza de Vaca's report also mobilized Spanish interest in the northern Rio Grande Valley, where he had encountered well-fed peoples who practiced sedentary agriculture, made textiles, employed pottery, and lived in permanent villages of stone and adobe brick. On the Aztec precedent, the Spanish assumed that every such Indian people also possessed gold or precious gems. The natives of the American southwest would pay dearly for this fallacy.

In 1538 the viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, dispatched northward a small scouting expedition led by a credulous (or mendacious) Franciscan friar, Fray Marcos de Niza, and guided by Esteban, the black member of Cabeza de Vaca's party. Proceeding ahead, Esteban won entry

into a Zuni village in what is now western New Mexico. But he soon offended his hosts by abusing their women, for which he was killed. Intimidated, Fray Marcos beat a hasty retreat to Mexico, where he breathlessly reported that he had seen a city, named Cibola, larger and richer than Tenochtitlán and one of seven great cities in the Zuni region. His report seemed to confirm a popular Spanish romance that "Seven Cities of Antilia" of incomparable riches lay somewhere in the New World. Although Fray Marcos had never entered any of the Zuni pueblos (of which there were only six), he described temples sheathed in precious metals and studded with valuable gems. That misinformation had profoundly tragic consequences, as it drew hundreds of Spanish conquistadores into prolonged and severe hardships and brought destruction upon native peoples lacking any precious metals.

Eager to believe, the viceroy invested in a new, larger expedition capable of conquering the Seven Cities. He entrusted command to a protégé, thirty-year-old Francisco Vásquez de Coronado. Combining his own funds with his wife's dowry and the viceroy's investment, Coronado recruited and equipped a force of about three hundred Hispanic soldiers, six Franciscan priests, eight hundred Mexican Indian auxiliaries, and some fifteen hundred horses and pack animals.

Guided by Fray Marcos, the conquistadores crossed the deserts and mountains of northern Mexico to reach the Zuni country in July 1540. The mounted, bearded, metal-clad soldiers were hot, weary, hungry, and parched when they approached the Pueblo that the Zuni called Hawikuh. But the conquistadores expected a rich reward, for Fray Marcos insisted that the pueblo was the fabulous city of Cibola that he had sighted the year before. When denied entrance, the Spanish stormed Hawikuh, killing hundreds and expelling the survivors. The hungry victors obtained stores of beans, corn, and turkeys but none of the rumored gold and silver that had lured them across hundreds of miles of hard, dry terrain. To their dismay, "Cibola" was only a modest pueblo of multistory tenements made of sunbaked brick. The frustrated soldiers heaped insults and curses upon their hapless guide, Fray Marcos. A disgusted Coronado reported that the friar had "not told the truth in a single thing."

To recoup his heavy investment, Coronado pressed onward, pursuing the usual rumors that some other Indian people just over the horizon possessed the riches of Spanish dreams. Pressing into the Rio Grande Valley in what is now New Mexico, Coronado imposed his forces upon the various native villagers, whom he lumped together under the name Pueblo because all dwelled in compact adobe-brick villages and practiced sedentary horticulture. Those similarities masked considerable linguistic and ceremonial differences. The Pueblo did not think of themselves as a common people, for they spoke at least seven distinct languages: Keresan, Piro, Tano, Tewa, Tiwa, Tompiro, and Towa. Not even the speakers of a common language

shared a political union. Instead, the Pueblo divided into at least sixty autonomous villages that were often at violent odds with one another.

They began, however, to find a new commonality in their common treatment by the Spanish invaders during the winter of 1540–41. Offended by the rape of their women and the plunder of their food, the Pueblo rebelled. The Spanish counterattack destroyed thirteen villages and killed hundreds of natives. To make a vivid and intimidating example, Coronado ordered one hundred captured warriors burned to death at the stake. None of this was what Cabeza de Vaca had intended.

Unable to defeat the Spanish, the Pueblo peoples tried to get rid of them by telling alluring stories of a wealthy kingdom named Quivira to the north and east on the far side of a great, grassy plain. In pursuit of Quivira, Coronado and his men crossed the Great Plains, a vast sea of grass without apparent landmarks. The only inhabitants were small groups of nomads who subsisted by hunting, on foot, immense herds of buffalo. After enduring weeks of hunger and thirst, crossing what are now parts of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, the conquistadores reached Quivira, a modest village of beehive-shaped and grass-thatched lodges inhabited by Wichita Indians. They possessed a productive agriculture but neither gold nor silver. In frustration and fury, the Spaniards tortured and strangled their Pueblo guide, who confessed the plot to lead the Spanish astray where they might get lost and die. To the dismay of the Pueblo, the Spaniards used a compass to find their way back to the Rio Grande, where they again proved larcenous and violent guests for the winter of 1541–42.

Demoralized by repeated disappointments and a severe riding injury, Coronado cut his losses and returned to northern Mexico in April 1542. He left behind a Franciscan priest and four assistants, who soon fell victim to Pueblo revenge. Coronado never fully recovered either his health or his fortune after the long, hard, and futile expedition. He even endured the indignity of an official prosecution for his abuse of the Pueblo. Unsuccessful conquistadores enjoyed neither the riches nor the impunity that success had bought for Cortés, whose greater crimes had been obscured by his great conquest.

FLORIDA

The expensive and destructive fiascos of Soto and Coronado further discredited conquistador expeditions and dissipated Spanish interest in the northern lands. During the 1560s, however, that interest revived as a defensive measure meant to protect the treasures produced by Mexico. During the late 1550s, predation by French pirates cut in half the Spanish royal revenue from the New World. The pirates concentrated their attacks on the most vulnerable run for Spanish shipping bound from the Caribbean to Spain: the

relatively narrow channel between Florida and the Bahamas. Spanish ships also suffered from the treacherous shoals and occasional storms that littered the Florida coast with shipwrecks. In an ironic reversal of the usual colonial process, the wrecks endowed a native people with gold, silver, and slaves, for the Calusa Indians scavenged the hulks for the shiny metals and enslaved the castaway sailors.

To recover the bullion, redeem the castaways, and protect shipping, the Spanish crown decided to establish a fortified colony along the Atlantic coast of Florida. The crown entrusted leadership to Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, a resourceful and ruthless naval officer. As an *adelantado*, he bore most of the costs and hoped to find in Florida the riches that had eluded Narváez and Soto. His expedition assumed a new urgency in 1565 when the Spanish learned that their French enemies had just built a small base, named Fort Caroline, in Florida at the mouth of the St. Johns River. Worse still, the French colonists were Protestants—known as Huguenots—whom the Catholic Spanish regarded as heretics.

At dawn on September 20, Menéndez and five hundred soldiers surprised and killed most of the Huguenots at their fort. A few days later the remaining French in the vicinity surrendered to the Spanish, expecting to save their lives. Menéndez promised only "that I should deal with them as Our Lord should command me." His God commanded Menéndez to tie their hands "and put them to the knife." Nearly three hundred French died in the two massacres. Reporting to his king, Menéndez explained, "It seemed to me that to chastise them in this way would serve God Our Lord, as well as Your Majesty, and that we should thus be left more free from this wicked sect." King Philip II applauded Menéndez's conduct.

To defend Florida against a French return, Menéndez founded a fortified town, named San Agustín (St. Augustine), on the coast forty miles south of the former Fort Caroline. San Agustín was the first enduring colonial town established by any Europeans within the bounds of the future United States. To intimidate the Indians and watch for pirates, Menéndez built seven other posts along the Gulf and the Atlantic coasts, principally Santa Elena at Port Royal Sound (in present-day South Carolina).

In 1570, Menéndez established a short-lived Jesuit mission far to the north on Chesapeake Bay. To avoid provoking the Indians, the priests declined Menéndez's offer to provide a company of soldiers. Instead, the Jesuits relied upon their native guide, a young man who was the son of a petty chief in the region. In 1561 he had been captured by Spanish mariners and carried to Mexico for baptism as "Luis de Velasco"—renamed in honor of the viceroy who served as his godfather. Sent to Spain, the Indian Luis de Velasco met the king and persuaded Spanish officials that he longed to return home to convert his people to Christianity.

But once back at Chesapeake Bay with the Jesuits, de Velasco promptly deserted to rejoin his people, warning them to dread and resist the

newcomers. In February 1571 he led a surprise attack that massacred the eight Jesuits and destroyed their chapel. Only a Spanish boy survived as an Indian captive in 1572, when Menéndez visited Chesapeake Bay to investigate. Unable to capture Luis de Velasco, Menéndez settled for killing twenty Indians in combat and hanging another fourteen from the yardarm of a warship. He then sailed away, leaving Chesapeake Bay to the Indians. The Spanish withdrawal subsequently benefited the English, who founded their Jamestown colony near the destroyed mission.

Most of the other small Spanish posts and missions in greater Florida also soon succumbed to either French or Indian attack. In addition, Menéndez ran out of money, having failed to find any silver mines. Frustrated, Menéndez denounced the official policy of pacification, commenting, "It would greatly serve God Our Lord and your majesty if these [Indians] were dead, or given as slaves." When Menéndez died in 1574, his Florida settlements had been reduced to just two, San Agustín and Santa Elena, neither prospering.

Upon his death, the crown became responsible for the faltering colony. Fearing English attack, in 1587 the Spanish evacuated and destroyed Santa Elena, withdrawing the colonists and their property to San Agustín, which became the sole Spanish settlement in Florida. Generating virtually no revenue, San Agustín drained the Spanish crown, which paid and supplied the demoralized garrison that kept the town barely alive. In 1673 the governor of Cuba confessed, "It is hard to get anyone to go to San Agustín because of the horror with which Florida is painted. Only hoodlums and the mischievous go there from Cuba."

Unable to attract colonists to Florida, the authorities tried to compensate by transforming Indians into Hispanics through the agency of Franciscan missionaries. The Spanish hoped that missions could consolidate their control over the interior and its natives more cheaply and securely than could soldiers. During the 1590s and early 1600s, Franciscan friars established an impressive set of missions along the Atlantic coast north of San Agustín into Georgia (Guale), in north-central Florida (Timucua), and to the west in the Florida panhandle above the Gulf Coast (Apalachee).

The governor at San Agustín helped by bestowing generous gifts on Indian chiefs who welcomed the priests into their villages. The Spanish also tempted the Indians with a trade that supplied coveted knives, fishhooks, beads, hatchets, and blankets. By embracing the Spanish alliance and accepting Franciscan missionaries, some chiefs also hoped to bolster their own power at the expense of rival native villages. Finally, the inability of traditional shamans to shield their people from the devastating new diseases induced many natives, in desperation, to hope that the newcomers offered a more powerful spiritual protection.

Conversion, however, came at a cultural cost. The priests systematically ferreted out and burned the wooden idols cherished by the natives, banned their traditional ball game, and enforced Christian morality, which required marriage, monogamy, and clothing that covered female breasts. In vain, the Timucua protested that "they enjoyed their vice and therefore it must not be evil but good and just." Converts who defied the friars suffered severe whippings that bloodied their backs. When persuasion, gifts, and whippings failed, the Spanish employed military force to punish and intimidate, brutally suppressing rebellions in 1597 at Guale and 1656 at Timucua.

The priests built their missions beside the major Indian villages: dozens of round wattle-and-daub houses with dome-shaped roofs of palm thatch. A principal village had communal storehouses, a large council house, and a circular public plaza that served as a ball court. The natives supported themselves and their new priests from productive fields of corn, beans, and squash, supplemented by hunting, fishing, and gathering. With Indian labor and local materials, the friars constructed a church, a cookhouse, a residence for the missionaries, and a barracks for a few soldiers. Every mission also had a new Christian cemetery that quickly filled with the Indian victims of epidemics. In 1659 the governor reported that ten thousand mission Indians had recently died of measles. Conversion bought safety from Spanish muskets but not from Spanish microbes. Despite the losses to disease, the system grew as the priests founded new missions in additional villages. At the peak in 1675, forty friars ministered to twenty thousand native converts who worshiped in thirty-six churches. After failing to build a settlement colony, the Spanish had apparently succeeded in Florida by pursuing the Franciscan mode of pacification—with a modicum of Indian consent.

NEW MEXICO

At the same time that the Spanish were resuscitating their Florida colony, other Spaniards returned to the Rio Grande to practice a similar program of pacification led by missionaries. Franciscans favored the venture as an opportunity to save Indian souls, which the crown welcomed as a source of new subjects and taxpayers. As in Florida, the crown also supported the Rio Grande colony from an exaggerated fear that rival empires had designs on the valley as a base for attacking Mexico. Finally, some secular colonists enlisted in the persistent hope that silver mines could be found in the northern interior.

Although the Spanish continued to rely on the *adelantado* system, the crown imposed naive new restrictions. Issued in 1573, the Royal Orders for New Discoveries ruled that future expeditions were "not to be called conquests." Instead, they were explicitly renamed "pacifications." The crown directed every *adelantado* to proceed "peacefully and charitably," for there was no "excuse for the employment of force or the causing of injury to the

Indian." But this imposed a fatal contradiction, for every *adelantado* assumed large debts to organize his expedition and needed a quick and big score to satisfy his creditors, which meant conquering and exploiting Indians.

The viceroy named Don Juan de Onate the *adelantado* to pacify the Rio Grande Valley and found the colony of "New Mexico." Like his predecessors, Onate suffered from delusions of grandeur, assuring his king, "I shall give your majesty a new world, greater than New Spain." In fact, he ventured into a country of scarce resources that sorely tested his patience and the Royal Orders for New Discoveries.

At first, all went deceptively well. During the spring of 1598, Onate led about five hundred colonists, including 129 soldiers and seven Franciscan friars, into the northern Rio Grande Valley. Alternating new promises of fair treatment with traditional displays of Spanish weapons, they founded their settlement in the midst of the Pueblo peoples, who initially offered no resistance.

But strains quickly developed between the Pueblo and their uninvited guests. Rather than construct their own settlement, Onate's colonists seized a pueblo, which they renamed San Gabriel, evicting the native inhabitants. Onate's undisciplined soldiers also ranged far and wide, extorting maize, deerskins, cotton blankets, buffalo robes, firewood, and women. These demands threatened Pueblo subsistence, for the natives had little surplus to spare, especially after Spanish cattle invaded their unfenced fields, severely damaging the crops. Soldiers noted that the Indians parted with their maize "with much feeling and weeping" as if "they and all their descendants were being killed." When an Indian rebuked Onate for seizing grain, the governor threw him off the roof of his pueblo. "He fell on his back and was killed instantly, never moving hand or foot," a soldier recalled. A sympathetic friar noted that when winter began, "our men, with little consideration, took blankets away from the Indian women, leaving them naked and shivering with cold."

The crisis came in December 1598, when Onate's nephew, Captain Don Juan de Zaldívar, led a patrol to the pueblo of Acoma to extort provisions. Fed up, the native warriors killed Zaldívar and ten soldiers. Onate and his colonists suddenly felt profoundly isolated, outnumbered, and vulnerable, surrounded by thousands of vengeful Pueblo Indians. From this sense of dread and weakness, Onate resolved to make a grim example of Acoma that would preserve his colony by intimidating the other Pueblo.

In January 1599, Spanish soldiers stormed Acoma, killing eight hundred Indian men, women, and children during three days of savage hand-to-hand and house-to-house combat. The victors herded five hundred survivors eastward to the Rio Grande for trial by Onate for treason and murder. He condemned all who were over the age of twelve to serve as slaves for twenty years. Those who were male and over the age of twenty-five also suffered the severing of a foot, to discourage them from running away or resisting their

masters. Onate declared innocent the captured children under the age of twelve, but he confiscated them from their families for rearing in Mexico as servants to Christian families.

The deaths and mutilations yielded a scant return on Onate's mounting debts, for the silver mines remained as elusive as ever and it was costly to supply and reinforce such a distant and isolated colony. Desperate and often irrational, Onate took flight into ill-conceived explorations, indulging in old-style fantasies of the fabulous just around the next bend. In 1601 he repeated Coronado's folly with a five-month trek across the Great Plains in search of golden Quivira and the Atlantic seaboard, finding neither. In 1604–5 Onate turned westward, seeking a route to the Pacific Ocean. With immense difficulty, he got only as far as the Colorado River.

To justify his western expedition, Onate reported as facts the fabulous hearsay of Indian informants. Onate assured the viceroy that he had nearly reached "extraordinary riches and monstrosities never heard of before." These included an Indian people with immense ears that hung to the ground; a second tribe never ate, but lived on odors, "because they lacked the natural means of discharging excrement"; and a third had men with "virile members so long that they wound them four times around the waist, and in the act of copulation the man and woman were far apart." The Indians delighted in Onate's credulity, but the viceroy was not amused. "This conquest is becoming a fairy tale," he wrote home to the king. Of course, he slipped in calling the expedition a "conquest," for official discourse required the term "pacification."

The colonists and their priests turned against Onate. The discouraged colonists bitterly complained that Onate had allured them with false promises into a harsh land where they could never prosper. By 1602 most had fled back to Mexico. Worse still, Onate alienated the Franciscan friars, who commanded the viceroy's attention. They denounced the governor for adultery and protested that his exactions ruined and alienated the Indians, undermining the friars' efforts to convert them. The friars demanded, "If we who are Christians cause so much harm and violence, why should they become Christians?" In 1607 the exasperated viceroy removed Onate and ordered his prosecution. After prolonged judicial proceedings, in 1614 the court found Onate guilty of adultery and of abusing both Indians and colonists. Fined and stripped of his titles and offices, he was ordered never to return to New Mexico.

By removing Onate, the viceroy became responsible for governing the distant and vulnerable colony. He favored abandoning New Mexico, but the Franciscan friars urged persistence under a reformed regime, insisting that more than seven thousand Pueblo Indians had been provisionally converted. If denied Spanish priests and protection, the converts would lapse from the faith and lose their claims to heaven. Unwilling to risk his soul on their damnation, the viceroy reluctantly retained New Mexico, subject to new

restrictions meant to contain costs and avoid conflicts with the Indians. In 1609 the viceroy commanded the new governor, Don Pedro de Peralta, to relocate the main Spanish settlement away from the native pueblos, by founding a new town named Santa Fe. To minimize the provocative food exactions on the Pueblo, the viceroy also directed the colonists to raise their own crops. To reduce rapes, the viceroy ordered that only married men could serve as soldiers in New Mexico. To restrict expenditures, he also reduced the garrison to just fifty men and forbade further exploration into the hinterland. The ethos of pacification would be given a second try in New Mexico, at crown expense and with the Franciscan priests preeminent in directing the feeble little colony.

Distance and isolation sentenced most New Mexican colonists to hardships and poverty. To obtain imported manufactured goods, including clothing and metal tools, they depended upon a government shipment that arrived only once every three or four years. Accompanied by soldiers, this caravan of ox-drawn, iron-wheeled wagons took six months to cover the fifteen hundred miles from Mexico City, much of it across harsh deserts, over steep mountains, and vulnerable to raiding by nomadic Indians. The Hispanics aptly called the most dangerous stretch the Jornada del Muerto. Spanish policy compounded the expense by adding customs duties and internal tolls to the exorbitant prices charged for consumer goods. The prohibitive costs of overland transportation also prevented the colonists from shipping their bulky agricultural produce to market in distant Mexico. Only salt, piñon, cattle hides, buffalo robes, and Indian slaves could bear the cost of transportation to net a small profit in Mexico. These commodities derived primarily from the tribute extorted from the Pueblo peoples. Caught in a double squeeze of high costs and small income, the New Mexicans had the lowest standard of living of any colonists in North America.

Prosperity remained confined to a small elite of about thirty-five families headed by former army officers. Favored by the governors, only the elite enjoyed both substantial land grants and *encomienda* rights to the Indian tribute and labor needed to develop their new properties into farms and ranches. The common Hispanics were mestizos who possessed modest status and limited means as farmers and artisans with small landholdings. Lacking the envied *encomienda* rights, the commoners had to work for themselves. To improve their lot, they coveted opportunities to procure Indian slaves.

Seventeenth-century New Mexico attracted few colonists, primarily desperate people who lacked opportunities elsewhere or convicts sent north as conscripted soldiers. In 1692 a Hispanic soldier described New Mexico as "at the ends of the earth . . . remote beyond compare." The slow pace of settlement kept the colony underdeveloped, which perpetuated its daunting reputation as a land of poverty and danger. Never more than 1,000 during the seventeenth century, the colonists remained greatly outnumbered by the Indians, despite the epidemics that reduced Pueblo numbers from 60,000 in 1598 to 17,000 in 1680.

Hoping to isolate their Indian converts from the colonists, the Franciscans preferred that New Mexico remain thinly populated by Hispanics. Too much past experience had taught the Franciscans to regard most frontier settlers as moral dregs who set a bad example. They drank too much and committed thefts, rapes, and blasphemies that contradicted Franciscan preaching and alienated Indians. Worse still, the colonists competed with the friars to command and exploit the natives as laborers. Far better, the missionaries reasoned, for the Hispanics to remain just numerous enough to support and defend the missions, but not so many as to harass the Indians and commandeer their labor. Given a free hand with the Pueblo peoples, the Franciscans believed that they could convert them into especially tractable and pure Christians—superior to common Hispanics.

THE NEW MEXICO MISSIONS

Like their brethren in Florida, the Franciscan missionaries of New Mexico enjoyed remarkable success in the early seventeenth century. Because the Pueblo peoples already lived in permanent, compact horticultural villages, it was relatively easy to create a mission simply by adding a church, a priest or two, and a few soldiers. By 1628 the friars had founded fifty missions, spread throughout the Rio Grande Valley and the adjoining Pecos Valley. A year later they added new missions far to the west in the Acoma, Zuni, and Hopi pueblos. The priests filled these new churches with thousands of converts, each sealed by the public sacrament of baptism, a ritual sprinkling of holy water on the head. In 1630 the chief administrator of the New Mexican missions, Fray Alonso de Benavides, reported, "If we go passing along the roads, and they see us from their pueblos or fields, they all come forth to meet us with very great joy, saying Praised be our Lord Jesus Christ!" According to Benavides, miracles also demonstrated that God had blessed the New Mexican missions: baptismal waters restored a dead Acoma infant to life; a Christian cross gave sight to a blind Hopi boy; a thunderbolt struck dead a shaman at Taos Pueblo; when Indians tried to kill a priest at Picuris Pueblo, he became invisible and escaped.

The progress was especially remarkable because the Franciscans demanded so much from their converts. Christian churches obliterated and replaced the circular *kivas*, sacred structures for religious dances and ceremonies. The priests smashed, burned, or confiscated the *katsina* images sacred to the Indians, deeming them idols offensive to the true God. In addition to mastering Christianity, the Indians were supposed to dress, cook, eat, walk, and talk like Spaniards, for the friars deemed everything traditionally native

to be savage and pagan. The Franciscan God demanded chastity before and monogamy within marriage. To promote a new sense of shame and modesty, the New Mexico Franciscans ordered the Indian women to cover themselves with cloth from neck to ankles. Backsliding or resistant converts suffered whipping with the lash, sometimes followed by a smearing dose of burning turpentine over the bloody back, which could prove fatal. One friar conceded that conversion had to be "reinforced by the fear and respect which the Indians have for the Spaniards."

Although the Franciscans were demanding and punitive, most Pueblo peoples decided that it was best to receive and heed them. In part, the Pueblo acted from fear of the Hispanic soldiers, who backed up the priests with their firearms, dogs, horses, whips, and gallows. Far better to ally with than to oppose such formidable men. Indeed, many Pueblo hoped that a military alliance with the Spanish would protect both from the nomadic warrior bands—Apache and Ute—of the nearby mountains and Great Plains. The tall and thick walls of the new missions made them formidable citadels for defense as well as churches for worship.

The Pueblo peoples also saw material advantages in an alliance with the Hispanics and their priests. They introduced appealing new crops, including watermelons, grapes, apples, and wheat, and metal tools superior to the traditional stone implements of the Pueblo, as well as domesticated sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, and mules, which enlarged the supply of meat and cloth or provided power for plowing and hauling. Given the manifest power of the Spanish and their impressive material culture, many Pueblo thought it best to mollify the invaders and gain some of their advantages.

The Pueblo especially longed to co-opt the supernatural powers exercised by the priests. The natives recognized the charisma and dedication that apparently rendered the priests so adept in the ways of the spirit world. Exceptional men, the Franciscans made extraordinary sacrifices and endured severe hardships. Zealous in spreading their faith, the friars embraced chastity and lived in a distant and difficult land among peoples of strange appearance and manners who periodically fulfilled the priests' longing for martyrdom. Seeking pain as a test of faith, many missionaries wore hair shirts, walked barefoot over a stony land, and periodically bloodied their own backs with sharp sticks. The priests also stood out among the other Hispanics because they rarely raped Indian women and preferred their vow of poverty to the accumulation of gold. In 1628 one friar assured the Zuni that he had come "not for the purpose of taking away their property, because he and the members of his order wished to be the poorest on earth." The friars also dazzled the natives with elaborate and novel displays of vestments, music, paintings, and sacred images all combined into the performance of elaborate processions and the ceremony of the mass. In their theatricality, celibacy, endurance of pain, and readiness to face martyrdom the priests manifested an utter conviction of the truth and power of their God.

The natives, however, wondered whether the apparent powers of the Franciscans were benevolent or malign. In particular, the deadly epidemics presented the Franciscans with both an opportunity and a test. On the one hand, the new diseases discredited as ineffectual the Pueblo's traditional spiritual guides, the shamans, which eased the Franciscans' access to the pueblos, where desperate natives sought protection in the Christian magic. On the other hand, because the Pueblo peoples associated the diseases with the newcomers, many natives suspected that the friars practiced a deadly sorcery, particularly by administering baptism. One Hopi warned his people that the priests "were nothing but impostors and that they should not allow them to sprinkle water of their heads because they would be certain to die from it."

Consequently, the priests were in a state of probation as the Pueblo tried to determine whether they benefited or suffered from the Christian power over the spirit world. No matter how successful in getting a church built and hundreds baptized, every priest lived in the shadow of violent death. If the epidemics increased, natives who had seemed docile could conclude that their priests were dangerous sorcerers who must be killed. Of the approximately one hundred Franciscans who served in New Mexico during the seventeenth century, forty died as martyrs to their faith.

Although the Franciscans had spread their message through the Pueblo peoples with remarkable speed, conversions were rarely as complete and irreversible as the priests initially believed. There was a fundamental misunderstanding between the friars and the Pueblo—a misunderstanding characteristic of every European missionary venture in North America. The Pueblo peoples were willing to add Christian beliefs and practices, as they understood them, to their own supernatural traditions. Natives had long adopted and augmented their spiritual repertoire—provided that the additions did not challenge their overall framework, in which supernatural power was regarded as diverse and woven into their natural world. But the Franciscans erroneously believed that their Pueblo converts had forsaken their pagan ways once and for all, without compromise.

In fact, most Pueblo compartmentalized their beliefs, old and new. They accepted features of Hispanic culture and the Catholic faith that they found useful or unavoidable, while covertly maintaining their traditional spiritual beliefs. While adopting elements of Hispanic culture that would help them adjust to a transformed world, most Pueblo peoples also tried to preserve a distinct identity and core culture derived from their ancestors. That compartmentalization enabled the Pueblo to reserve the inner resources needed to rebel suddenly against their new masters. If the priests and their soldiers pushed too hard while delivering too little, the Pueblo could abandon Christianity and resort entirely to their ancient spirits for help in recovering their autonomy.

THE PUEBLO REVOLT

In New Mexico, relations were especially tense between church leaders and government officials, and between the missionaries and the colonists. The Franciscans both needed and resented the Hispanic colonists. Although they provided a military reserve needed to intimidate the Indians, the colonists also competed with the friars for control over Indian labor. Each colonial group pretended to be the truer friend of the Indians, and each denounced the other as selfish exploiters.

The competition led to violent conflicts between the priests and the colonial governors—who had not come to New Mexico to keep a vow of poverty. The governors needed to recoup the sums that they had paid the viceroy to purchase their office, to reap some further profit beyond the high costs of living in their hardship post, and to set aside an additional fund to bribe their successors to keep their peculations secret. To make money, the governors established their own ranches, farms, and workshops, all of which demanded Indian workers. Consequently, the governors shared the colonists' resentment of the Franciscan success in capturing so much Indian land and labor for building up the missions.

Some governors also worried that the priests demanded too much change too fast from the Indians, demands that might provoke a rebellion that would destroy the weak colony. In the interests of security, the governors sometimes contradicted the efforts by the priests to suppress the native dances, *katsina* images, and polygamy. In 1660, Governor Mendizabel infuriated the friars by defending ceremonial dances as harmless nonsense "that signified nothing." He was wrong; their dances signified much to the Pueblo, who felt in renewed contact with their spirit world. As the priests had feared, the revival of traditional dances undercut their authority.

Inconsistent in their Indian policies, the governors treated the Pueblo more indulgently but the nomadic Indians of the hinterland more callously. Beginning during the 1620s, the governors made money by organizing slave raids against the Apache and Ute of the hinterland. The governors employed the captives on their own properties, bestowed them upon local favorites, or sold them in Mexico, where the slaves worked on *haciendas* and in the silver mines. In Indian slaves, the seventeenth-century governors discovered the profitable commodity for export that had so long eluded their predecessors. Governors justified the raids to the viceroy as part of a "just war" provoked by the nomads, who had to pay with their lives and their labor for defying Hispanic rule. Although enriching to governors and their cronies, the slave raids provoked counterattacks that devastated common settlers and the Pueblo peoples. By stealing horses and some guns from Hispanic missions and ranches, the nomads gradually became faster and more dangerous raiders, quickly striking and retreating.

Because the governors drafted Pueblo Indians to serve in the slave raids, the nomads considered them Spanish allies and the proper targets for revenge. Because hungry and bloodied Pueblo did not make for productive and dedicated converts, the Franciscan friars saw their influence decline as the nomadic raids increased. Worse still, growing numbers of Pueblo fled from their vulnerability and Franciscan dictation to seek refuge among the Apache. One friar complained that the runaways had "gone over to the heathen, believing that they enjoy greater happiness with them, since they live according to their whims, and in complete freedom."

Tracing the troubles to their source, the Franciscans denounced the governors as corrupt, vicious, and impious meddlers. The friars repeatedly appealed to the viceroys in Mexico City to recall every offending governor. The governors responded by imprisoning and humiliating Franciscans and by withholding the soldiers that the priests needed to discipline the Indians. Once begun, these conflicts festered and intensified for years, in part because the appeals of both parties to Mexico City took so long. In turn, the cautious viceroys often preferred to consult with their superiors across the Atlantic in Madrid before taking action in New Mexico. An exchange of official recriminations and investigations and counterinvestigations dragged on over the years, entangling most governors in legal webs that consumed their estates.

Unwilling simply to await the viceroy's ruling, the Franciscans sometimes took immediate action in New Mexico. At a minimum, they excommunicated the offending governor, which cut off church sacraments and consigned his soul to eternal damnation. On one occasion, the friars even tore out the governor's church pew and hurled it into the street. The missionaries also encouraged restive soldiers to imprison one governor for nine months and to assassinate a second.

These conspicuous conflicts diminished Pueblo respect for, and fear of, all Hispanics. In 1639 an Indian congregation was shocked when Governor Rosas took offense at a Franciscan sermon, stood up, and bellowed, "Shut up, Father, what you say is a lie!" For Indian audiences, Rosas also staged plays that mocked Christian ritual and clerical authority. Governor Mendizabal liked to visit pueblos to hold impromptu trials that found the local friar guilty of siring Indian children. Because Indians especially valued public harmony and serenity, the Pueblo peoples felt contempt as they witnessed the backbiting conflicts among the Hispanics.

As the Spanish divided, the disparate Pueblo peoples became more unified, in response to the Hispanic presence. Previously lacking any common language and identity, the Pueblo peoples obtained both—as Spanish became a common second language and as they developed shared grievances against a set of exploiters. Both developments improved their ability to unite against the colonizers.

During the late 1660s and 1670s a prolonged drought repeatedly undercut harvests, reducing many Pueblo to starvation. In 1669 a priest reported

that after three years of failed harvests, "a great many Indians perished of hunger, lying dead along the roads, in the ravines, and in their huts." They were reduced to eating cattle hides, "preparing them for food by soaking and washing them and toasting them in the fire." Lacking surplus produce to trade, the Pueblo suffered increasing raids by the nomads, who took by force what they had previously sought through barter. The more exposed and vulnerable Pueblo communities in the Pecos Valley dissolved, and the survivors either joined their tormentors on the Great Plains or fled to the Rio Grande Valley pueblos, where the refugees compounded the strain on the scant supply of food.

The related ravages of drought and raiders rendered more oppressive the persistent Spanish demands for Indian tribute in labor and produce. Exactions that could be tolerated in good years became intolerable in hard times, especially because the Hispanics refused to reduce their demands for tribute to reflect the diminished means and shrinking numbers of the Pueblo. Afflicted by disease, famine, and violence, the Pueblo population fell from 40,000 in 1638 to 17,000 by 1680. Nonetheless, the Pueblo remained collectively responsible for the same level of tribute, so the amount of maize and blankets that every Indian had to pay more than doubled. After the uprising of 1680 a royal attorney sent from Mexico City investigated and concluded that the colonists' "many oppressions . . . have been the chief reason for the rebellion."

By 1675 it had become abundantly clear that the Christian God could not protect the Indians from epidemic diseases, drought, and nomadic raiders, much less from exploitation by the Hispanics. Led by their shamans, the Pueblo peoples revived their traditional ceremonies, hoping to restore the disrupted balance of their world. The revival terrified the Franciscans, the colonists, and the governor. In 1675 the Hispanics arrested and whipped forty-seven Pueblo shamans on charges of sorcery. Three of the prisoners also suffered death by hanging, and a fourth committed suicide. The governor meant to export and sell the other forty-three as slaves but backed off when confronted and threatened by a large and enraged force of Pueblo warriors. In two ways the episode prepared the Pueblo for mass rebellion. The brutal persecution taught them that the Hispanics would never permit an open revival of the ancient ways that the Pueblo needed to restore their collapsing world. And having intimidated the governor, the Pueblo saw, for the first time, their potential to overcome their oppressors. Pueblo leaders began to plot a massive rebellion.

The chief plotter was a charismatic shaman named Popé, who had been whipped in the witch-hunt of 1675. He preached that the Pueblo could recover their health, dignity, prosperity, and freedom by destroying the Christians and their churches. Developing contacts in most of the native pueblos, Popé cultivated a large and growing following dedicated to his message of native revival. Especially appealing to men outraged at the Franciscan attack on polygamy, Popé promised each warrior a new wife for every Hispanic he killed.

In August 1680, most of the seventeen thousand Pueblo people rose up in a well-coordinated rebellion, involving more than two dozen towns scattered over several hundred miles, all newly united by shared hardships, oppressions, and a rudimentary understanding of Spanish. Some Apache bands assisted the uprising, for they had their own scores to settle with the Hispanic slave raiders. The rebels destroyed and plundered missions, farms, and ranches, procuring horses and guns. Venting their rage at eighty years of exploitation, the rebels took special pains to desecrate churches, to smash altars, crosses, and Christian images, and to mutilate the corpses of priests.

The colonial survivors either fled south to El Paso or took refuge at Santa Fe, where they confronted a siege by two thousand rebels. When the rebels cut off the town's water supply and tightened their cordon around the palace, Governor Antonio de Otermín and the colonists evacuated Santa Fe, fighting their way to safety three hundred miles down the Rio Grande to El Paso. The rebellion killed about two hundred of the one thousand colonists in New Mexico, including twenty-one of the forty priests. In a few weeks, the Pueblo rebels had destroyed eight decades of colonial work to create Hispanic New Mexico. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was the greatest setback that natives ever inflicted on European expansion in North America.

Popé encouraged the Pueblo to restore their native names and to reverse their baptisms by plunging into the Rio Grande in a ceremony of purification. He declared Christian marriages dissolved and polygamy restored. To replace the churches, the Indians restored their sacred *kivas*. Popé urged forsaking everything Hispanic, including the new crops and domesticated livestock, but most Pueblo found these too useful to relinquish. Selective in adapting Hispanic culture, the Indians were equally selective in rejecting it.

The rebellion began to falter almost as soon as it triumphed. Deprived by victory of their common enemy, the Pueblo peoples revived their traditional feuds, falling out both within villages and between them. In addition, renewed drought brought famine and another rupture in trade with their Apache allies, who resumed their raiding. The troubles discredited Popé, who had promised that the rebellion would bring perpetual peace and prosperity. Losing influence, he died in obscurity sometime before 1690.

In 1691 the beleaguered Hispanic refugees at El Paso rallied under the able leadership of a new governor, Diego de Vargas, an ambitious, resourceful, and selectively ruthless Spanish nobleman. Exploiting divisions and war-weariness among the Pueblo, he reclaimed New Mexico in 1692–93, overcoming the greatest resistance at Santa Fe, which he captured by storm. In 1696 he suppressed a renewed but smaller rebellion that killed five priests and twenty-one colonists and soldiers. But to the west, the Zuni and Hopi

peoples successfully defied the governor and secured their *de facto* independence, which provided a refuge for Pueblo militants fleeing from Spanish rule in the Rio Grande Valley.

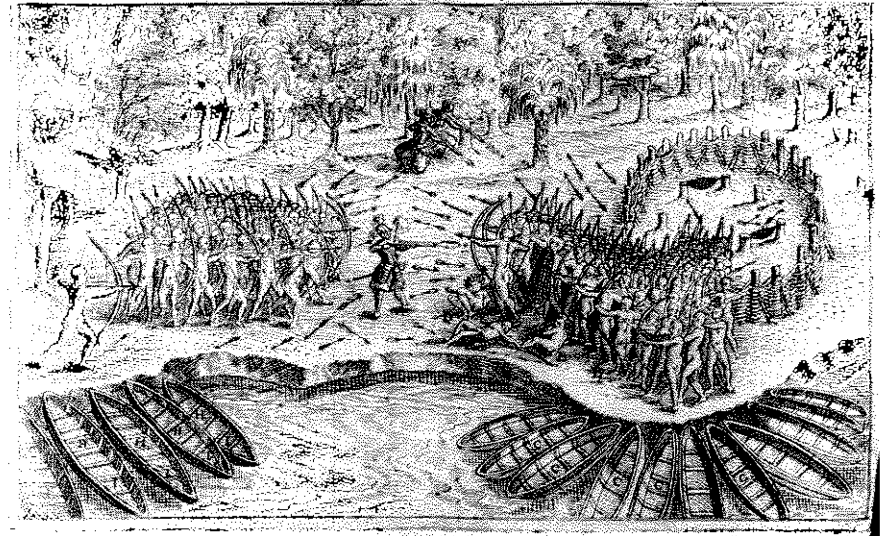
The Pueblo peoples of the Rio Grande never again mounted a major rebellion against Spanish rule. Bloody and destructive to the Pueblo as well as the Spanish, the rebellions of 1680 and 1696 taught both to compromise. The Pueblo peoples accepted Spanish persistence and authority, while the Hispanics practiced greater restraint. The governor abolished the *encomienda*—the extortion of their labor and tribute that was the single greatest grievance of the Pueblo. He also guaranteed to each pueblo a substantial tract of land and appointed a public defender to protect Pueblo legal rights in disputes with colonists. The returning Franciscans also lowered their expectations, tolerating as harmless many Pueblo ceremonies that they had previously suppressed as heathen. The Rio Grande Pueblo accepted the Catholic sacramental and seasonal cycle of festivals, quietly conducting traditional ceremonies in their *kivas*—while the Franciscans wisely looked the other way. And the leading Hispanics, official and religious, kept their feuding within new bounds, avoiding the overt ruptures that had so discredited them in Pueblo eyes during the seventeenth century.

After 1696 the Hispanic and Pueblo peoples of New Mexico also needed one another for mutual protection against the nomadic warrior peoples of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains. As the dominant party, the Hispanics led the alliance, but they depended upon Pueblo warriors. Together they sustained the colony—but at the heavy cost of chronic warfare with the nomads.

5

Canada and Iroquoia

1500–1660



A French engraving of the 1609 battle in which Samuel de Champlain and two other French musketeers helped their Indian allies defeat Iroquois warriors beside Lake Champlain. The advent of firearms revolutionized Indian warfare, discouraging the use of the mass formations and wooden shields depicted here. From Samuel de Champlain, Les Voyages de Champlain *(Paris, 1613).*

During the sixteenth century, English, French, and Dutch mariners intermittently crossed the Atlantic to plunder Spanish shipping and colonial towns or to conduct a smuggling trade. But to enjoy a steady and enduring share in the trade riches of the Americas, Spain's rivals needed their own colonies. Settling in or near the Caribbean, close to New Spain, had its temptations: proximity facilitated piracy on Spanish ships and ports, and the subtropical climate would permit the development of valuable sugar plantations. But, as the French discovered in Florida during the 1560s, the Spanish were a powerful foe, able to destroy any hostile colony within easy reach.

Distant from Spanish power, the northern latitudes of North America offered a safer setting for a French colony, but smaller prospects of profit. Despite repeated efforts, French and English explorers had failed to find either precious metals or a "Northwest Passage" through or around northern North America to the Pacific and the trade riches of Asia. And because of long winters and short growing seasons, the northern lands could not produce the tropical crops so cherished in Europe. In 1541 the Spanish emperor declined to block a French expedition to colonize along the St. Lawrence River in Canada. The emperor explained, "As regards settling in the Northern Sea, there is nothing to envy in this; for it is of no value, and if the French take it, necessity will compel them to abandon it." As predicted, that French settlement, led by Jacques Cartier, was defeated by the bitter cold, the ravages of scurvy, and the hostility of Indians provoked by French thefts and threats.

With nothing but corpses to show for the expensive effort, the French abandoned further attempts at permanently colonizing the St. Lawrence Valley until the next century. In the meantime, French voyagers developed a profitable and semipermanent presence at the river's broad mouth in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Along with English, Basque, and Portuguese mariners, the French discovered two profitable commodities that made northern colonization possible: fish and furs. But those commodities and the cold climate limited the numbers of fur traders and the seasonal stay of fishermen.

The fur trade deeply implicated Europeans and natives in mutual dependency. The concept of Indian trade "dependency" has become controversial. Some historians believe that dependency was early, addictive, irreversible, and quickly destructive to natives, while endowing European traders with almost complete mastery. At the other extreme, critics of "dependency theory" insist that trade remained limited and natives retained the upper hand because they could readily return to stone tools and weapons and animal-skin attire.

Both positions miss the deepening *mutuality* of dependency, binding Europeans and Indians together in an uneasy embrace. As Indians became dependent upon European metals, cloth, and alcohol, the traders and their empires became hostage to Indian demand. Because a cutoff of trade increasingly threatened the Indians with hunger and destitution, they considered it

an act of war. Needing Indians as allies and hunters, the northern traders could not afford them as enemies. Rather than risk a breakdown in trade, the traders grudgingly accepted Indian trade protocols, restrained their prices, and cultivated alliances. Entangled in alliances with Indians, European traders often felt compelled to assist native wars that complicated and slowed their pursuit of profit. From the Indian perspective, the French came, in the words of historian Allan Greer, "not as conquering invaders, but as a new tribe negotiating a place for itself in the diplomatic webs of Native North America." In those webs, the Indians negotiated from a position of strength.

In their cultures and languages, the Indians of northeastern North America divided into Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples. Centrally located, the Iroquoian peoples clustered around Lake Ontario and along the St. Lawrence Valley, to the east, or the Susquehanna Valley, to the south. The Iroquoians were surrounded by an even larger and more diverse array of Algonquian speakers, who occupied the Atlantic seaboard from Labrador to North Carolina and along the northern and western margins of Iroquoia to Lake Superior.

The Iroquoians practiced a mixed economy in which hunting and gathering supplemented a highly productive horticulture that sustained many large and permanent villages. A similar way of life prevailed among the more southern Algonquians, along the coast from New England to North Carolina. The northern Algonquians, however, lacked horticulture and were more mobile and dispersed, relying on a seasonally shifting round of fishing, hunting, and gathering over broad, cold territories.

During the late sixteenth century, the French took an early lead in the fur trade by establishing a summer presence at Tadoussac, on the northern shore and near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. The French traders developed alliances with the northern Algonquians, especially the Micmac, Montagnais, and Algonkin. Through their nexus, during the early seventeenth century, the French became drawn up the St. Lawrence Valley to the Great Lakes, where they contacted the Huron, an especially numerous and prosperous people with an Iroquoian culture. By allying with the northern Algonquians and the French, the Huron broke with their fellow Iroquoians, the Five Nations, who dwelled south of Lake Ontario.

In 1610 the French choice of allies (and enemies) seemed astute, for the Five Nation Iroquois, by virtue of their more southern setting, were inferior hunters and indifferent traders. But they were formidable warriors who, after 1610, obtained metal weapons from their own European suppliers, the Dutch, who colonized the Hudson Valley. As they became better armed than their enemies, the Five Nation Iroquois violently disrupted the northern trade alliance and imperiled the small French colony on the St. Lawrence. Drawn deep into North America by the fur trade and its native alliances, the French had made especially dangerous enemies.

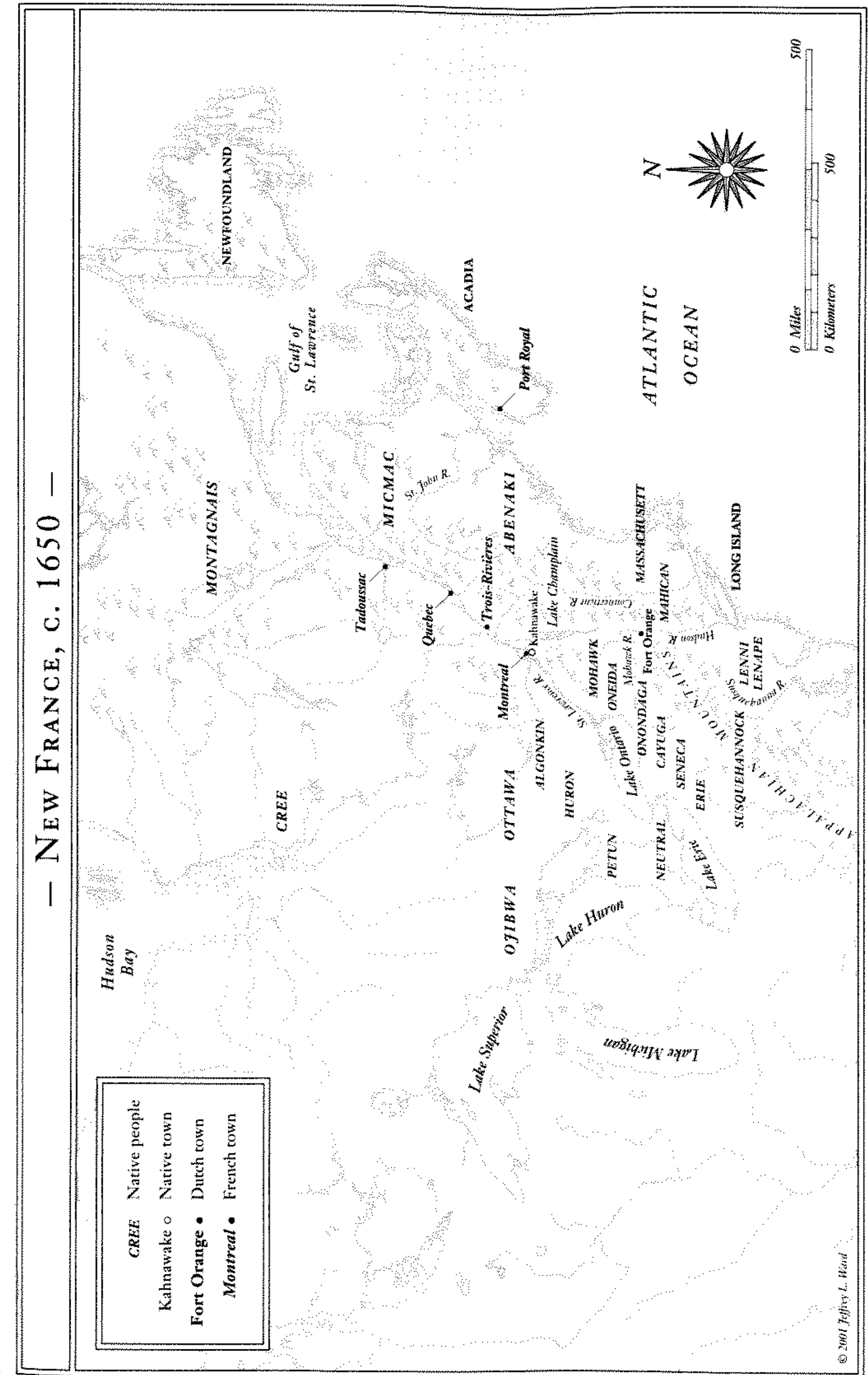
THE FUR TRADE

By 1580, around Newfoundland and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the fisheries and the whale and seal hunts employed at least four hundred vessels and some twelve thousand men. No nation controlled the fisheries, which attracted a mix of French, Basque, Portuguese, and English. In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert visited and proclaimed his authority under the English queen to govern the fishing camps at Newfoundland, but no one heeded this pompous declaration after he departed a few weeks later and drowned on his return homeward.

To obtain firewood, fresh water, and room to sun-dry their fish or to render whales into oil, the fishermen and whalers established temporary camps on shore in sheltered coves. The shore camps brought the mariners into contact with Indian hunters wearing attractive furs: beaver, fox, otter, lynx, and martin. By offering European manufactured goods—especially beads, kettles, and knives—the mariners purchased furs from eager Indians. In 1534 along the coast of Acadia (now Nova Scotia), Jacques Cartier found Micmac waving furs on sticks as an invitation to land and trade. Offering high value per volume, furs were an ideal colonial commodity, one that (like gold and silver) could more than pay for its transatlantic transportation. Rendered scarce in Europe by overhunting, furs commanded high prices for making hats and for trimming fine clothes. Because Indians voluntarily performed the hard work of hunting the animals and treating their furs, traders could immediately profit in America without the time, trouble, expense, and violence of conquering Indians to reorganize their labor in mines and plantations.

At first, the Indians pursued the trade within their own cultural parameters. Living within an animistic conception of the cosmos (rather than a capitalist notion of an economy), the Indians thought of all objects, material as well as living (stones as well as beavers), as possessed of some spiritual power, which the Algonquian speakers called *manitou*. Detecting *manitou* concentrated in especially bright and shiny objects, the northeastern Indians traditionally cherished copper ornaments brought from Lake Superior or polished seashell beads, known as wampum, from Long Island Sound. They discerned the same beauty and spiritual power in the colorful glass beads and shiny metals brought by European mariners and traders. Displayed on the body or carried into the grave, the new trade goods demonstrated high status and access to *manitou*. Adapting the shiny new materials to traditional uses, Indians broke up brass kettles for reworking into arrowheads, necklaces, earrings, finger rings, and armbands.

The natives also adapted alcohol to their own purposes. At first, they balked at the novel taste and disorienting effect, but eventually they developed a craving. Drinking as much and as rapidly as they could, the Indians



got drunk as a short cut to the spiritual trances that had previously required prolonged fasting and exhaustion. Alcohol also offered a tempting release of aggressions, ordinarily repressed with great effort and much stress, because Indian communities demanded the consistent appearance of harmony. Regarding alcohol as an animate force, natives believed that drinkers were not responsible for their violent actions. Initially appealing and apparently liberating, alcohol became profoundly destructive once it became common and cheap. In drink, natives lashed out with knives and hatchets, killing their own people far more often than the colonial suppliers of their new drug. Fortunately, during the seventeenth century, the natives' access to alcohol remained limited and sporadic, permitting only occasional binges.

At first, the northeastern Indians also conducted the trade through their chiefs in the traditional form: as a ritualized exchange of gifts to symbolize friendship, trust, and alliance. A French missionary noted, "Presents among these peoples dispatch all the affairs of the country. They dry up tears; they appease anger; they open the doors of foreign countries; they deliver prisoners; they [symbolically] bring the dead back to life; [a chief] hardly ever speaks or answers, except by presents." In Indian diplomacy, words were cheap and meaningless unless accompanied by the ceremonial delivery of valued presents.

Because Europeans thought of trade as purely commercial and distinct from diplomacy, they initially balked at the Indian notion that trade sealed an alliance between equals. A French trader complained of the Micmac:

> And they set themselves up as brothers of the King, and it is not to be expected that they will withdraw in the least from the whole farce. Gifts must be presented and speeches made to them, before they condescend to trade; this done they must have . . . the banquet. Then they will dance, make speeches and sing *Adesquidex, Adesquidex*. That is, that they are good friends, allies, associates, confederates, comrades of the King and of the French.

Although impatient with these formalities, the wiser traders complied. At Tadoussac in 1623 an inexperienced French mariner opened trade with the Montagnais by offering a present that the chief found insultingly insufficient. The chief cast the paltry goods into the river and ordered his warriors to plunder the vessel, leaving in "payment" only what furs they deemed fit. Recognizing his weakness, the trader had to let the Montagnais rifle his ship. Because the French submitted, the chief returned in the evening to restore friendship ritually by accepting a proper present from the relieved trader—reestablishing peaceful trade and mutual alliance.

Just as the French adapted to Indian trade protocols, Indians began to think of the goods as commodities with negotiable prices. They learned never to trade with the first vessel to come their way but to await several to compete for their furs. The natives became adept at driving a hard bargain, to the dismay of the Europeans, who preferred to think of Indians as perpetual children. An English trader complained, "They are marvailous subtle in their bargaines to save a penny. . . . They will beate all markets and try all places, and runne twenty, thirty, yea forty mile[s], and more, and lodge in the Woods, to save six pence." Proud of their triumphs in trade, Indians defied stereotype to regard many Europeans as naive and easy marks. A Montagnais boasted to a Frenchman, "The English have no sense; they give us twenty knives like this for one Beaver skin." But their canny bargains meant no conversion to capitalist thinking. Indeed, European traders noted that the Indians sought higher prices for their furs so that they could reduce their work, preferring leisure once their basic desires had been met.

As coastal traders proliferated, their goods became cheaper, more ubiquitous, and demystified. Indians came to value the trade goods more for their utility than for their shine. Natives appreciated the superior strength and cutting edge of metal arrowheads, axes, knives, and hatchets—all useful as both tools and weapons. Iron or brass kettles facilitated cooking, and metal hoes eased the work of tilling maize, beans, and squash. All these items eased the strain and reduced the duration of native work.

Occasionally the more ruthless mariners interrupted trade to kidnap Indians as human commodities. Taken to Europe, they were put on profitable display as curiosities and trained to assist future voyages as interpreters. Eager for a voyage home, the captives shrewdly told their captors what they wanted to hear, promising to reveal gold and silver and friendly Indians eager for Christianity. Unfortunately, European diseases consigned most of the captives to European graves before European fantasies could take them home.

In some regions, the kidnapping soured relations between the natives and mariners. When Giovanni da Verrazzano, an Italian mariner in the French service, visited the coast of Maine to trade with the Abenaki Indians, he discovered:

> If we wanted to trade with them for some of their things, they would come to the seashore on some rocks where the breakers were most violent, while we remained on the little boat, and they sent us what they wanted to give on [a] rope, continually shouting to us not to approach the land; they gave us the barter quickly, and would take in exchange only knives, hooks for fishing, and sharp metal. We found no courtesy in them, and when we had nothing more to exchange and left them, they made all the signs of scorn and shame that any brute creature would make, such as showing their buttocks and laughing.

Although the Abenaki had learned fear of, and contempt for, the mariners, they did not wish to stop trading, for the new metal goods had become too useful to do without.

Unable to make the wonderful new things themselves, the Indians could get them by increasing their hunting. The northern Algonquian peoples began to hunt throughout the year. A Montagnais explained, "The Beaver does everything perfectly well, it makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread; in short, it makes everything." By the mid-seventeenth century, the trade goods were sufficiently common that the northeastern Algonquian peoples had forsaken their stone tools and weapons—and the craft skills needed to produce them. If cut off from trade, natives faced deprivation, hunger, and destruction by their enemies.

By enhancing the Indians' needs, trade increased their demands upon the environment. No longer hunting only to feed and clothe themselves but also to supply an external market, the Indians had to kill more animals, especially beaver. As market incentives overwhelmed the inhibitions of animism, the Indian hunters killed animals at an unprecedented rate that depleted their numbers. During the 1630s a French Jesuit reported that the Montagnais broke open beaver lodges to "kill all, great and small, male and female." He worried that they would soon "exterminate the species in this Region, as has happened among the Hurons, who have not a single Beaver."

Upon depleting their local beaver, Indians extended their hunting into the territories of their neighbors, provoking new and more desperate conflicts. Exploiting their edge, the trading natives raided poorly armed neighbors who lacked regular access to transatlantic commerce. For example, from French traders the Micmac obtained metal weapons and small sailboats, which they employed to attack the Indians of New England, taking scalps and captives. The raids also compelled the New England Indians to stick closer to home, opening up beaver territories for Micmac hunters.

Initially luxuries, the trade goods became necessities of survival in a more violent world, as the new weapons increased the stakes of warfare. Indians had long conducted sporadic and limited wars, inflicting a few casualties every year. The new weapons, however, enabled the well-armed to destroy their trade-poor neighbors. In addition to providing enlarged hunting grounds, such conquests endowed victors with captive women and children to replace the hundreds lost to the new diseases introduced by the traders. A people who lost captives and hunting territory faced obliteration, for want of the means to reproduce and to attract the traders needed to stage a comeback with their own weapons.

Although the fur trade pitted the Indians against one another in destructive competition, no people could opt out of the intertwined violence and commerce. As a matter of life and death, every native people tried to attract European traders and worked to keep them away from their Indian enemies. The more vulnerable and distant Indians felt compelled to break through to the European traders, who were game for recruiting new customers. As competitors in a capitalist market, the traders always needed additional hunters and more pelts. Indeed, distant and desperate peoples gave more furs for

fewer trade goods, assuring larger profits to the trader. Consequently, the coastal Micmac and Montagnais found it increasingly difficult to keep their European suppliers away from their native enemies to the south and west.

While the best-positioned natives sought to control the supply of furs, they also worked against comparable efforts by Europeans to monopolize their end of the trade. Just as the Indians employed violence to constrain the trade for their own benefit, Dutch, English, and French traders exploited their national enmity toward one another. The violent competition also divided traders of the same nation, primarily pitting official monopolies against smaller rivals.

CANADA

The fur trading companies felt ambivalent about establishing permanent posts within their trading territory. On the one hand, posts attracted Indians more surely than did seasonal vessels. Moreover, if fortified and armed with cannon, a post might scare away other traders. On the other hand, fortified posts also attracted growing numbers of colonists, who might plunge into the fur trade on their own account. Wanting no new competitors, the companies preferred to keep their posts small and inhabited exclusively by their own dependents.

At the turn of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth, French fur traders focused their efforts around Tadoussac, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and along the peninsula they called Acadia (now Nova Scotia). To enforce a monopoly in Acadia, the official French trading company (which shifted over the years as one company succeeded another in royal favor) founded a succession of small, all-male, and short-lived settlements at Sable Island (1598–1603), St. Croix River (1604–5), and Port Royal (1605–7 and 1610–13). All failed to deter interloping traders, who found many unguarded coves and harbors on the long Acadian coast. Moreover, harsh and scurvy winters annually killed most of the colonists and demoralized the survivors. In 1613 an English pirate destroyed Port Royal, asserting his nation's counterclaim to the region.

By then the French had shifted their focus northward to reclaim the St. Lawrence Valley, formerly probed by Jacques Cartier. Known as Canada, the St. Lawrence Valley was a poor location for an agricultural colony. The growing season was short and the winters long. The French, however, initially did not come to farm. For their prime purpose, securing the fur trade, the St. Lawrence was ideal for five reasons. First, the valley was safely distant from Spanish power. Second, the northern location meant especially thick and valuable furs. Third, the resident Montagnais and Algonkin were especially skilled hunters, more so than more southern peoples. A more southern setting would have entailed a better growing season, but at the expense of

inferior animal pelts and less skilled hunters (and greater risk of Spanish enmity).

Fourth, the long St. Lawrence offered the deepest access westward into the continent of any river that flowed into the North Atlantic. Cartier had demonstrated that European ships could ascend a thousand miles to meet Indians, who could come even greater distances by canoe from the vast Great Lakes country, where beaver abounded. The St. Lawrence promised the French a more extensive fur trade with many more northern Indian peoples than any other river system in the continent could provide. Fifth, at a place the French called Quebec, the river narrowed to provide both a good harbor for ships and high ground ideal for a fortified post bristling with cannon to keep out the vessels of competitors. Frustrated by Acadia's open access, the official French company delighted in the prospect of a vast northern interior rich in furs—and with a single point of entry.

The shrewd and resourceful Samuel de Champlain led the renewed French bid to found the colony of New France on the St. Lawrence River. Combining the talents of trader, soldier, cartographer, explorer, and diplomat, Champlain recognized that French success in Canada depended upon building an alliance with a network of native peoples. During the summer of 1608, Champlain built a small fortified trading post at Quebec. In 1627, after nearly two decades of colonization, New France still had only eighty-five colonists, all of them men and all at Quebec. Cultivating a mere seventeen acres, the colonists relied upon French supply ships for much of their food. And they depended upon Indian goodwill for their survival and prosperity.

The valley's Montagnais and Algonkin bands allowed their Huron allies access to the French traders at Quebec. The Huron were welcome allies primarily because their villages lay at the strategic portage between Lake Huron and the Ottawa River, a northwestern tributary of the St. Lawrence that was the trade gateway to the western Great Lakes. Consequently, the Huron could broker the flow eastward of copper and furs from around Lake Superior and the return circulation of European trade goods headed westward.

The most tightly clustered people in the northeast, the twenty thousand Huron lived in about twenty fortified towns set among extensive fields of corn, squash, and beans. Because their large numbers quickly overhunted the nearby animals, including the beaver, the Huron could not contribute much to the fur trade as hunters. Instead, they staked out a role as provisioners and middlemen in the west-to-east trade network of the north country. The Huron traded their agricultural surplus to more northern and western Indian hunters—the Algonkin, Nipissing, Ottawa, and Ojibwa—in return for their furs. The Huron then carried the pelts eastward via the Ottawa River in canoes to trade to the French at Quebec. In exchange, the Huron obtained manufactured goods both for themselves and to trade, at inflated prices, to their Indian clients for more furs. During the 1620s, the Huron annually supplied ten to twelve thousand pelts, nearly two-thirds of all the furs obtained in New France, although very few derived from animals killed by Huron hunters.

By framing an alliance to control the east-west trade, the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron excluded and alienated the Five Nation Iroquois. Dwelling to the south in what is now upstate New York (west of the Hudson, south of Lake Ontario, and east of Lake Erie), the Five Nations were, from east to west, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. Determined to take trade goods, captives, and revenge, the Five Nation Iroquois frequently raided northward to afflict the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron—which hurt the French trade.

Few in number and dependent on the fur trade, the French at Quebec needed good relations with their suppliers and hosts, the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron. The Canadian French could not afford to bully, dispossess, or enslave the Indians, needing them instead to persist as suppliers of furs—a role the natives were eager to perform. Coming in small numbers, the French needed relatively little land, putting slight pressure on Canada's natives, who had more territory than they needed after the epidemics of the sixteenth century.

In making Indian friends, however, Europeans almost invariably made other Indians their enemies. As their price of business and protection, the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron expected the French to help them fight the Five Nation Iroquois. Compelled to choose, the French embraced the northern alliance and made southern enemies.

In June 1609, Champlain and nine French soldiers joined a large allied war party that ventured south to attack the Iroquois. Reaching the lake subsequently named Champlain, the French and their allies found a fortified encampment of two hundred Iroquois, probably Mohawks. After both sides spent the night singing and shouting insults, the Iroquois sallied out from their barricade at dawn. Expecting a traditional Indian battle, rich in display and light in casualties, they formed up in a mass, relying on wooden shields, helmets, and breastplates for protection from arrows. Three Iroquois war chiefs led their advance. Springing from hiding in the bush, Champlain and his soldiers stepped forward and discharged their guns, mortally wounding all three chiefs. Astonished, the other Iroquois broke and fled, suffering additional casualties from the pursuit by their Indian enemies. A year later, the French and their firearms helped their allies win a second and even bloodier battle near the site of the first.

The introduction of firearms revolutionized Indian warfare as the natives recognized the uselessness of wooden armor and the folly of massed formations. Throughout the northeast, the Indians shifted to hit-and-run raids and relied on trees for cover from gunfire. They also clamored, with increasing success, for their own guns as the price of trade. Previously, colonial officials of all empires had forbidden the sale of guns to Indians, even if allies, but as the fur trade grew more competitive, traders recognized the immense profits

in selling what the Indians wanted most. Eager for weapons to even scores against their enemies to the north, the Iroquois paid up to 120 florins for a gun that cost Dutch traders only 6 florins.

As a second consequence of the battles, the Iroquois identified the French with their enemies and saw the importance of disrupting their fur trade. Otherwise, the Huron, Algonkin, and Montagnais would grow ever more powerful with metal weapons. The Iroquois sought their own weapons by waylaying and plundering Huron, Algonkin, and Montagnais canoes.

THE FIVE NATIONS

Unfortunately for the French, the Five Nation Iroquois were especially formidable enemies dwelling in large, fortified hilltop villages. The women cultivated large and productive fields of maize, beans, and squash, producing an abundant surplus that freed their young men to pursue war. More than any other northeastern people, the Five Nation Iroquois could sustain long-distance and large-scale raids against multiple enemies. The Huron could nearly match the horticultural surplus and devotion to war, but the Montagnais and Algonkin were hunter-gatherers who could not.

Success in war boosted male prestige and influence, creating powerful incentives for young men to prove themselves against outsiders. Plunder and increased hunting territories were important but secondary benefits in wars meant primarily to obtain scalps and prisoners from the enemy. By adopting or by torturing prisoners, warriors maintained the power of their people, which was understood to be both spiritual and numeric.

Any individual's death diminished the collective power of his or her lineage, clan, village, and nation, provoking powerful and angry bursts of grief, especially by female relatives. Natives feared that their dead would linger about the village, inflicting disease and misfortune unless appeased with loud and expressive mourning. To draw the bereaved out of their agony and to encourage dead spirits to proceed to their afterlife, neighbors staged condolence rituals with feasts and presents. The best present of all was a war captive meant to replace the dead.

To appease grief, to restore power, and to build their own status, Iroquois warriors conducted "mourning wars" in which they sought prisoners from their enemies. The chiefs distributed the prisoners to grieving matrilineages, whose elder women decided their fate: adoption or death. The matrons usually adopted women and children, who were more readily assimilated. Captive men more often faced death by torture, especially if they had received some crippling wound. Inflicting death as slowly and painfully as possible, the Iroquois tied their victim to a stake, and villagers of both genders and all ages took turns wielding knives, torches, and red-hot pokers systematically to torment and burn him to death. The ceremony was a contest between the

skills of the torturers and the stoic endurance of the victim, who manifested his own power, and that of his people, by insulting his captors and boasting of his accomplishments in war. After the victim died, the women butchered his remains, cast them into cooking kettles, and served the stew to the entire village, so that all could be bound together in absorbing the captive's power. By practicing ceremonial torture and cannibalism, the Iroquois promoted group cohesion, hardened their adolescent boys for the cruelties of war, and dramatized their contempt for outsiders.

A captive chosen for adoption usually endured the early, less crippling stages of torture before being rescued and suddenly lavished with care and affection. That sudden alteration served psychologically to bond the relieved captive with the captors. Given the name of a recently deceased Iroquois, the adoptee had to embrace that identity. The successful could enjoy considerable prestige and even become, in time, honored chiefs or matrons. The resistant reaped the dishonor of a sudden and unceremonious death blow from a hatchet.

Probably introduced by the Iroquois peoples, the rituals of torture and adoption had spread to their Algonquian neighbors to become common throughout the northeast long before the European invasion. Although horrifying to European witnesses, the torments of northeastern torture had their counterparts in early modern Europe, where thousands of suspected heretics, witches, and rebels were publicly tortured to death: burned at the stake, slowly broken on a wheel, or pulled apart by horses. The seventeenth century was a merciless time for the defeated on either side of the Atlantic.

During the fifteenth century, the Five Nation Iroquois had waged ferocious wars upon one another. For safety, they congregated in fewer but more crowded villages surrounded by wooden palisades and located on defensible hilltops. The broken and randomly discarded human bones of apparently tortured and executed prisoners proliferated in the refuse middens of Iroquois villages. Their oral tradition later recalled, "Everywhere there was peril and everywhere mourning. Feuds with outer nations, feuds with brother nations, feuds of sister towns and feuds of families and of clans made every warrior a stealthy man who liked to kill." The internal violence threatened to destroy the Five Nations.

During the early sixteenth century, a prophet named Deganawida and his chief disciple, Hiawatha, preached a new message of unity and peace meant to stem the violent feuding between the Iroquois nations. Deganawida and Hiawatha persuaded the Five Nations to form a Great League of Peace and Power. They periodically sent chiefs to the main village of the central nation, the Onondaga, to hold condolence ceremonies as an alternative to the further killing of the mourning war. In these ceremonies, the chiefs presided as the kinfolk of a killer gave presents to the relatives of the victim. Delivery and acceptance restored peace and broke the cycle of revenge killings. Right thinking restored, the chiefs returned home.

The Great League was not a European-style nation-state. Unlike the kingdoms of France, England, and Spain, the Iroquois Great League possessed no central political authority to devise collective policies or to coerce its own people into obedience. Indeed, the various villages preserved their autonomy, all free to go their own way, provided they relied on the condolence ceremonies to keep the peace with their fellow confederates. The Great League was primarily a ceremonial and religious forum for promoting calm and peaceful thinking in a world where grief, rage, and war prevailed. For the Iroquois, peace and war were primarily states of mind. Only through periodic public, oral, and ritual reiteration could peace have a chance to compete on an equal footing with the anger of warriors.

But the Great League did have political, diplomatic, and military consequences. By performing its spiritual ceremonies effectively, the Great League kept the Five Nations at peace. In effect, the Great League functioned as a pact of mutual nonaggression. And peace within rendered the Five Nation Iroquois more formidable external foes.

The Iroquois thought of themselves as especially devoted to peace, but others knew them as particularly fearsome in war. To appease mourning, exercise rage, and test young men as warriors, Iroquois culture required enemies, if not nearby, then farther away. Consequently, internal peace refocused Iroquois warfare outward, to the detriment of the many peoples living beyond the Great League. Many of their enemies were Algonquian-speakers, including the Montagnais and the Algonkin to the north in Canada; the Abenaki, Mahican, Mohegan, Nipmuck, Massachusett, and Wampanoag to the east in New England; and the Lenni Lenape to the southeast in the Delaware Valley.

But the Great League ideology led the Five Nation Iroquois especially to focus their hostility on the many Iroquoian-speaking nations that rejected pointed invitations to join. In 1600 the Five Nations of the Great League included only about 22,000 of the 95,000 northeastern Iroquoians. Those living beyond the Great League included the Huron and Petun to the north, the Erie, Wenro, and Neutral to the west, and the Susquehannock to the south. Other Iroquoians were also especially favored war victims, because their linguistic and cultural similarities facilitated their incorporation as captives into Five Nation villages.

During the seventeenth century, the Five Nations needed ever more captives as they coped with an increased death rate wrought primarily by new diseases and secondarily by a more violent warfare featuring metal weapons and guns. In 1633–35, smallpox and measles epidemics killed half of the Iroquois, plunging their nations into grief. The angry survivors suspected sorcery by an enemy people, such as the Huron, which demanded revenge and captives. Young men, eager to prove themselves, responded to clan mothers clamoring for new adopted relatives to appease their grief and for the ritual execution of enemies to vent their rage. Captives renewed Iroquois power while weakening an enemy. But a mourning war was a vicious circle, for almost every war party suffered casualties, which demanded more captives and more torture. And every war party provoked a counterraid from the enemy, carrying death into an Iroquois village and carrying away captives—which of course demanded a further escalation.

THE DUTCH TRADE

Unfortunately for the French and their native allies, in August 1609, just five weeks after Champlain helped defeat the Iroquois, Henry Hudson, an English mariner in Dutch employ, ascended the river later named for him to initiate a fur trade with the Mohawks. In 1614 a Dutch company established a year-round trading post on the upper Hudson near present-day Albany. Initially called Fort Nassau and later (after 1624) Fort Orange, this fortified post on the Hudson River was the Dutch equivalent of French Quebec on the St. Lawrence. Although much shorter than the St. Lawrence, the Hudson partially compensated by offering a more southern outlet that usually remained ice-free and open to shipping year-round. By occupying two adjacent river systems, the French and the Dutch drew the battle lines of European commerce and empire along the preceding fault line of native rivalry—and they raised the stakes.

Formerly at a geographic disadvantage in seeking access to the trade goods of the St. Lawrence, the Iroquois suddenly enjoyed immediate proximity on the Hudson to the Dutch, Europe's premier manufacturers and traders. Understanding the newcomers primarily as purveyors of new and valuable goods, the Mohawks named the Dutch *Kristoni*, which meant "metal-making people." Indeed, the Dutch could supply better-quality metal goods at a lower cost than could the French. Moreover, the Dutch at Fort Orange more quickly offered guns to their Indian customers than did the French at Quebec.

During the late 1620s the easternmost Iroquois nation, the Mohawk, improved their access to Fort Orange by displacing the Algonquian-speaking Mahican, who had lived around the post and had tried to control the trade. Routed and driven eastward, the Mahican left the west bank of the Hudson to the Mohawk, who shared the Dutch trade with their Iroquois confederates to the west. Hoping to tap the northern trade connections of the Mahican, the Dutch had tried, in vain, to stem the Mohawk assault, suffering three dead colonists for their pains. Rather than risk profits in avenging the loss, the pragmatic traders accepted the Mohawk victory, recognizing the Iroquois as their primary trading partners. Although occupied by the Dutch, Fort Orange functioned as an asset, and almost a possession, of the Iroquois, who acquired growing quantities of European weaponry.

Become much better armed than their Algonkin, Montagnais, and Huron

enemies, the Iroquois escalated their northern raids. At first, the Iroquois primarily attacked canoe convoys on the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers. From the westbound convoys the Iroquois seized French trade goods to supplement their Dutch supplies; from the eastbound convoys they stole pelts to take south to trade to the Dutch at Fort Orange.

To protect the fur trade, the French extended their fortified trading posts westward up the St. Lawrence, founding Trois-Rivières in 1634 and Montreal in 1642, but both posts remained small and weak. In 1644 the Iroquois raiding led a French priest to despair:

> It is almost impossible to make either peace or war with these barbarians; not peace because war is their life, their amusement, and their source of profit all in one; not war because they make themselves invisible to those who seek them and only show themselves when they have heavy odds in their favor. Go to hunt them in their villages and they fade into the forest. Short of leveling all the forests in the country, it is impossible to trap them or to halt the destruction of these thieves. . . . It is not that these thieves are always all around us, but that one is never sure either that they are there, or that they are not, hence we have to beware of them all the time. Were it not that we hope God will eventually deliver us, the country would have to be abandoned, for we are well aware that human strength and wisdom alone cannot save us.

Ironically, the French also came to depend upon Iroquois hostility as a barrier that kept the northern Indians from traveling south to trade with the Dutch. The French recognized that they could not compete with the quality, quantity, or price of the Dutch trade goods. Therefore, a prolonged peace with the Iroquois would tempt northern Indians to carry their furs to Fort Orange for shipment to Amsterdam—to the detriment of Quebec and Paris. The French could ill afford friendship with the Iroquois, although they paid a heavy price in death and destruction for their enmity.

The Five Nation Iroquois became equally ambivalent about peace with the French. The Iroquois usually preferred to steal furs from their northern enemies to take to Fort Orange, rather than permit them as friends a free passage to the Dutch traders. Because the northern Indians possessed better furs, they would, in the event of peace, become the preferred clients and customers of the Dutch, to the detriment of the Iroquois. As inferior suppliers of furs, the Iroquois had a perverse common interest with the French, an inferior source of manufactured goods. They both tacitly worked to keep apart the best suppliers of furs (the northern Indians) and of manufactures (the Dutch).

In effect, during most of the seventeenth century, the Iroquois and the French needed one another as enemies. Although tempted by anger to obliterate each other, neither could do so, and cooler heads in both camps recognized a certain mutual interest in the survival of the other. Indeed, as a trade magnet that drew the Huron and Algonkins into Iroquois ambushes, the New French trading posts were better harassed than destroyed.

JESUITS

The fur trade launched New France, but the colony was sustained by a Catholic bid to convert the Indians. The two pursuits were overlapping but not identical. By converting the Indians to Catholicism, French leaders hoped to make the natives more dependent and dependable as allies and trading partners. The French colonizers drew inspiration from the Spanish success in building Franciscan mission systems to consolidate apparent control in Florida and New Mexico. The Spanish success seemed especially germane because New France, like Florida and New Mexico, needed to compensate for a small colonial population. But the mission system was not perfectly compatible with the fur trade, which was conducted primarily by rough characters with little interest in religion. The French priests frequently denounced the fur traders as moral reprobates who set a vicious example to the Indians, while the traders often resented the missionaries as unrealistic meddlers who ruined the natives as hunters and warriors. Consequently, French officials had to balance the interests of the fur trade and the missions in hopes of preserving the Indian alliance and the colony of New France. Those officials also had to mollify Indians who wanted trade more than missionaries.

The French missionaries manifested the Counter-Reformation, a reform movement meant to stem and reverse the growth of Protestantism by bringing a new rigor and zeal to Catholic institutions. The missionaries meant to steal a march on the Protestant heretics by converting the world's heathen peoples to Catholicism. The missionaries also worried that thousands of Indians faced an eternity in hell for want of Christianity. These concerns loosened the purse strings of devout and wealthy French men and women, who funded missions and convents in New France.

Seventeenth-century Europeans regarded non-Europeans as socially and culturally inferior—but not as racially incapable of equality. Lacking a biological concept of race, seventeenth-century Europeans did not yet believe that all people with a white skin were innately superior to all of another color. European elites primarily perceived peoples in terms of social rank rather than pigmentation. Elites (including missionaries) possessed a powerful caste consciousness of their immense superiority over the common people of their own nation, whom they readily disciplined with pain and treated with contempt. Seventeenth-century colonial leaders ordinarily considered the common peasants and laborers of Europe as little better than Indians. And the elite deemed Indians fully capable of forsaking their backward

culture in favor of a superior one. Once assimilated to French culture and religion, Indians were entitled to equality with common colonists. Of course, assimilation to the bottom ranks of a European social hierarchy was not an especially appealing prospect.

In 1615 the French launched their first effort to evangelize the Indians of Canada, sending four priests of the Recollet order (the French branch of the Franciscans) to convert the Montagnais. But the Recollets faced grave difficulties in attending to far-flung and highly mobile northern Indians. Unlike the Indians of New Mexico and Florida, the Canadian Indians enjoyed the upper hand in their alliance and could safely treat priests with indifference or contempt. The missionaries had to endure muscle-numbing days paddling canoes or portaging them through clouds of mosquitoes and blackflies. The priests could not decide which was worse, the prolonged spells of hunger or consuming the Indian stews bubbling with strange plants, animals, and insects. The priests also spent restless nights in bark lodges, filled with bodies, fleas, dogs, and smoke. Overmatched by the hardships, the distances, and the indifference of the Montagnais, the four Recollet priests managed, in ten years, to baptize only fifty natives, almost all on their deathbeds and hedging their eternal bets.

The missionary cause obtained critical reinforcements in 1625–26 with the arrival of eight priests of the Jesuit order. Wearing long dark robes, the Jesuits became known to the Indians as the Black Robes. Better organized, financed, and trained for missionary service, the Jesuits took the lead in Canada as the Recollets faded. Instead of pursuing the poor and mobile Montagnais near Quebec, the Jesuits proceeded farther west to target the more prosperous and settled Huron. In 1636, Father Charles Garnier explained, "If Canada in my view is a holy and sacred temple built by God, the country of the Hurons is the *sanctum sanctorum* . . . because they are a stable nation and not vagabonds like most of the others." In Huron country, the Jesuits established four satellite missions around a formidable central mission, Sainte-Marie, which had a palisade, stone bastions, and a chapel, hospital, forge, mill, and stables. By 1647 the Huron missions employed eighteen priests and twenty-four lay assistants.

The Jesuits also benefited from the growing French influence over the Huron. As they became more dependent on trade, the Huron became more susceptible to French pressure. In 1609 the Huron had compelled Champlain to help them fight the Iroquois as the price of trade. In 1634, Champlain obliged the reluctant Huron to accept Jesuit priests as his price for continued trade. The Huron did not dare call Champlain's bluff, although he probably would have backed down, for trade was at least as critical to the French as to the Huron. Trade dependency ran both ways in New France.

Like their Spanish counterparts, the French Jesuits devoutly believed that everything in this life was inconsequential except as a preparation for the next. The salvation of souls for an eternal afterlife in heaven was all that truly

mattered. One Jesuit exulted, "The joy that one feels when he has baptized an Indian who dies soon afterwards and flies directly to Heaven to become an Angel certainly is a joy that surpassed anything that can be imagined." The missionaries also advanced their own claims to heaven by the degree to which they suffered to save the souls of others. Above all, those who suffered martyrdom for their faith won an immediate and honored place in heaven next to God.

Compared with other European missionaries, including the Recollets, the Jesuits proceeded more patiently in converting the Indians. In 1642 a Jesuit explained:

> To make a Christian out of a Barbarian is not the work of a day. . . . A great step is gained when one has learned to know those with whom he has to deal; has penetrated their thoughts; has adapted himself to their language, their customs, and their manner of living; and when necessary, has been a Barbarian with them, in order to win them over to Jesus Christ.

Rather than compel Indians to learn French and relocate into new mission towns, the Jesuits mastered the native languages and went into their villages to build churches.

Most Jesuits also astonished the natives by their single-minded dedication, by their lack of interest in the land, furs, and women that other Europeans coveted. One priest returned to the Huron after having survived capture and torture by the Iroquois, losing most of his fingers. Because the Huron cherished stoicism under torture as the ultimate test of manhood, they honored this priest. One Huron remarked, "I can neither read nor write, but those fingers which I see cut off are the answer to all my doubts."

Despite their patience and zeal, the Jesuits still had to bridge a cultural chasm. In contrast to the religious absolutism of the Christian missionaries, the natives insisted that there were multiple and relative supernatural truths—some intended for Europeans and others for Indians. Committed to consensus, the natives also disliked the disputation and dogmatism of the missionaries. In turn, the natives' bland equanimity in reply especially infuriated the priests. A frustrated Jesuit reported that the Indians listened patiently but ultimately replied, "You can have your way and we will have ours." He added, "If we reply that what they say is not true, they answer that they have not disputed what we have told them and that it is rude to interrupt a man when he is speaking and tell him he is lying." Another impatient missionary remarked, "What can one do with those who in word give agreement and assent to everything, but in reality give none?"

The natives did not believe in a starkly dichotomized afterlife of heaven and hell. Instead the Indian dead passed into a dreamworld where they lived much as they had in this life, employing items cast into their graves. In 1637

a missionary complained, "You find some of them who renounce [the Christian] Heaven when you tell them there are no fields and no corn there; that people do not go trading nor fishing there; and that they do not marry." The Indians also had spiritual experts, known as shamans, who manipulated the spirits, sometimes inflicting and sometimes curing disease. Because their spiritual power was double-edged, capable of harming as well as hurting, the shamans were both feared and respected. Naturally, they proved to be the greatest enemies of the missionaries.

As Catholics, the priests could practice their own divine magic that made them effective competitors with the shamans. Unlike Protestant ministers, the Jesuit priests believed that their rituals—especially the mass—could induce God to provide immediate relief: needed rain, abundant game, or the destruction of a crop pest. And, as Catholics, the Jesuits had sacred items—crucifixes, rosaries, Agnus Dei medals, and saints' relics that could replace the stone charms kept in pouches by Indians as sources of spiritual power. Indeed, the missionaries exploited the ceremonial complexity and sacred objects of Catholic worship to impress the natives. A Jesuit explained:

> The outward splendor with which we endeavor to surround the Ceremonies of the Church . . . the Masses, Sermons, Vespers, Processions, and Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament . . . with a magnificence surpassing anything that the eyes of our savages have ever beheld—all these things produce an impression on their minds, and give them an idea of the Majesty of God.

Initially, like other Indians elsewhere, the Huron were drawn to the apparent magical prowess of the Jesuits rather than to their abstract Christian message.

But by competing with the shaman as divine magician, the priest inherited his obligation to preserve the people from disease and famine. A Jesuit lamented, "And then you are responsible for the sterility or fecundity of the earth, under penalty of your life; you are the cause of droughts; if you cannot make rain, they speak of nothing less than making away with you." The missionary reaped the shaman's ambivalent reputation as a powerful source of both menace and relief.

The lethal diseases that accompanied the Jesuits from Europe especially complicated their mission. During the 1630s, epidemics killed half of the Huron, reducing their number to ten thousand. A Huron mourned, "The plague has entered every lodge in the village, and has so reduced my family that today there are but two of us left, and who can say whether we two will survive?" The survivors wondered why they died in such great numbers shortly after the priests came among them, and why the diseases killed Indians while sparing the priests. Many Huron suspected that the priests were deadly sorcerers—especially given the Jesuit eagerness to hover over the terminally ill to administer the rite of baptism. Although the Jesuits insisted that baptism secured salvation for the next world, Indians suspected a water sorcery that terminated lives in this world. A Jesuit conceded, "For it has happened very often . . . that where we were most welcome, where we baptized most people, there it was in fact where they died the most."

Ties of kin and clan held Indian villages together and served as the bonds that either resisted or disseminated the Jesuit message. Because the priests ruled that Christian converts could marry only fellow converts, many Indians initially balked at converting for fear they would not find a husband or wife. Because the Jesuits preached that Christians and non-Christians went to separate afterlives, Indians also dreaded eternal separation from their ancestors and relatives. One Huron protested, "For my part, I have no desire to go to heaven, I have no acquaintances there." The Jesuits needed to persuade entire lineages to convert together. But once the Jesuits achieved a certain critical mass of converts, the process rapidly snowballed. The consideration that had held people back then became an incentive to convert, so that entire lineages could be reunited after death in the Christian heaven.

As the Jesuits gathered a following, they demanded more cultural concessions from their Huron converts. The Jesuits denounced torture and ritual cannibalism, premarital sex, divorce, polygamy, and the traditional games, feasts, and dances. An exasperated Huron chief complained to a priest, "My nephew, we have been greatly deceived; we thought God was to be satisfied with a Chapel, but according to what I see he asks a great deal more." Another Huron concluded, "God does not love us, since he gives us commandments that we cannot keep."

The growing numbers of Christian converts and the escalating demands of the priests undermined the unity and morale of the Huron villages. Some traditionalists argued for breaking with the French, killing the priests, and making peace with the Five Nation Iroquois. But most Huron felt that they could not live without trade and alliance with the French. To retain both, the Huron had to keep hosting the dangerous and divisive Jesuits. Their decision attracted mounting attacks from the Five Nations, well armed with Dutch muskets.

DESTRUCTION

In the mid-seventeenth century, Iroquois warfare dramatically escalated to nearly genocidal proportions, devastating their native enemies and imperiling the French colony. In 1643 a Jesuit feared that the Iroquois meant "to ravage everything and become masters everywhere." Never before had native peoples attacked and killed each other on the scale and with the ferocity of the Iroquois during the 1640s and 1650s. European trade and diseases combined both to empower and to distort the Iroquois way of war, ultimately to

their own detriment, as well as to the misery of their many enemies. Dutch guns enabled the Iroquois to take the offensive, while Dutch-introduced pathogens increased deaths, escalating the frequency, distance, bloodshed, and captive-taking of mourning wars as the Iroquois desperately tried to restore numbers and spiritual power, lest both ebb and their enemies triumph.

Historians usually characterize the Iroquois attacks as a "beaver war," as an Iroquois drive to destroy the Huron as competitors in the fur trade. There are some grounds for that interpretation. The fur trade did reinforce the Huron and Iroquois place in competing alliances, and the commerce did provide the metal hatchets and firearms that made possible the Iroquois victory. But the Iroquois assault on the Huron was primarily a mourning war and only secondarily a beaver war. The Five Nations especially targeted the Huron to obtain captives for adoption into Iroquois families and villages, reeling from their recent losses to disease and war.

Assailing the Huron also served the ideology of the Great League of Peace and Power. Because the Huron had repeatedly rejected invitations to join the confederacy, the Iroquois felt duty-bound to destroy their independence and absorb them as adopted captives, or as consumed victims, into the Great League. A Jesuit noted, "So far as I can divine, it is the design of the Iroquois to capture all the Hurons, if it is possible; to put the chiefs and a great part of the [men] to death, and with the rest to form one nation and one country."

In 1648 and 1649, Iroquois warriors stormed the Huron villages, killing and capturing hundreds. During the assaults, Jesuit priests hurriedly baptized all they could reach before they too were hacked or burned to death. By 1650 the Huron villages had all been destroyed or abandoned. The surviving Jesuits tried to find some divine purpose in the massive destruction by pagans of a people who had begun to convert to Catholicism. One priest concluded, "Let them be killed, massacred, burnt, roasted, broiled, and eaten alive—patience! that matters not, so long as the Gospel takes its course, and God is known and souls saved."

The Iroquois eliminated the Huron villages to deter their thousands of captives from running away home. Indeed, the Iroquois systematically hunted down for death or capture groups of Huron refugees, no matter how far they ran. Several hundred Huron survivors fled eastward to live as refugees at Lorette near Quebec. Many more headed west beyond Lake Michigan, where they gradually amalgamated with other Iroquoian-speaking refugees, the Petun, to make up a new, composite people known as the Wyandot. But the great majority of the Huron survived only as adopted captives among the Iroquois. In 1650 a stray Huron surrendered to the Mohawk, explaining, "The country of the Hurons is no longer where it was,—you have transported it into your own. It is there that I was going, to join my relatives and compatriots, who are now but one people with yourselves."

During the 1650s, the Iroquois ravaged the three independent Iroquoian peoples living along Lake Erie and Lake Huron: the Erie, Petun, and Neutral. As with the Huron, the victors killed most of the defeated warriors, captured their women and children for adoption, and burned the villages to discourage their flight homeward. The massive influx of captives barely covered the continuing Five Nation losses to disease and war. In 1657 a French priest visited the Iroquois and concluded that adopted captives had become a majority. By 1660, through conquest, the Great League of Peace and Power seemed at last to have absorbed almost all of the Iroquoians—but at a very heavy cost in bloodshed and destruction.

From the perspective of their enemies, the Iroquois appeared relentlessly united, purposeful, and invincible. Yet, viewed from within Iroquoia, their wars seem more desperate than calculated, and more internally corrosive than securely triumphant. By winning such massive victories and taking more captives than they could assimilate, the Iroquois provoked new dissensions and divisions within their own nations. The adopted captives often clung to their previous identity and ideas. Many Huron exhorted their new kin to embrace Catholicism and a French alliance. During the 1670s, they persuaded about four hundred Mohawk to secede and emigrate northward to settle at Kahnawake, near Montreal, to benefit from French trade and a French mission. Their secession weakened the Five Nation Iroquois as it strengthened New France with new Indian allies.

But nothing was ever quite that clear-cut in the paradoxical complexities of the colonial world. By maintaining kinship and trade ties with the Mohawk Valley, the Kahnawake Mohawk compromised French imperial interests. They discouraged French attacks on their southern kin, shared sensitive military information, and smuggled Canadian furs to Albany (the former Fort Orange), where the merchants paid higher prices. Just as the destruction of the Huron did not ruin the French interest (or entirely benefit the Iroquois), so too the defection to Kahnawake proved a mixed blessing for New France. Fundamentally, natives pursued their own interests and manipulated the wishful thinking of the colonizers.

Trade, alliance, and war entangled colonizers and natives in ways that they could not have predicted, could rarely control, and might not have chosen—had they had that luxury. New France proved far more violent and precarious and much less profitable than Champlain had hoped. In pursuit of fur-trade profits, the French had been drawn into a complex world of native alliances and enmities that compelled unanticipated investments of lives and money. Colonial empires never fulfilled the European fantasies of command and control, although they unleashed powerful forces of disease, trade, and war that, although beyond European control, fundamentally disordered far-flung and diverse native peoples.