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Fellow travelers: Indians and Europeans together on the early American trail

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FELLOW TRAVELERS:
INDIANS AND EUROPEANS TOGETHER ON THE EARLY AMERICAN TRAIL

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Philip Levy
2001
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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For Sarah and Felix
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. CHAINS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. REWARDS</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. CONTROL</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. RATTLESNAKES</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V. TOGETHER</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTERWORD</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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ABSTRACT

The European exploration of America has traditionally conjured up images of Europeans intrepidly scanning horizons, meticulously detailing maps, and graciously offering curious natives access to God and goods. More than two decades of anthropological, historical, and ethnohistorical scholarship have tempered this heroic image by recognizing that explorers were also invaders well armed with destructive weapons, contagious diseases, insidious and insinuating world views, and dangerously sophisticated social infrastructures. The new picture also shows in great detail the complex and often contradictory role Indians played in this grand drama. Consequently, one can no longer picture colonial-era European explorers or travelers without also envisioning their Indian companions, both men and women, guiding the way, carrying the baggage, gathering the food, and providing needed information. This dissertation examines the relationships that Indians and Europeans formed together while on North American expeditions of conquest, trade, and Christianizing between 1520 and 1800.

Scholars of many disciplines have mined the colonial era’s copious travel records. But none have attempted a systematic ethnohistorical exploration of Indians’ and Europeans’ time together tramping on the trail, pacing on the foredeck, and skidding over rapids. This dissertation seeks to fill that historiographic gap. Understanding these relationships adds cultural and experiential color to the history of American exploration and travel, while also illuminating a neglected arena of the colonial cultural contest.

Travel entailed confrontations with the elements that could literally wipe out a party that made a wrong turn, ignored or misread the weather, or misjudged the current of a given rapid. Furthermore, poor provision planning or diplomatic bungling could also bring the grandest plans to grand disaster. But while battling the elements, Indian and European travel partners often battled each other. They played a subtle game of tug-of-war for control over the course, pace, and timing of travel. They fumed and connived over whose leadership, strategies, and values should hold sway. They wrestled over whose deities should be honored, and they derided each other’s individual and collective abilities when one failed to live up to the other’s visions of the ideal traveler. Tensions ranged from the subtlest forms of petty one-upmanship to physical coercion, and even occasional fisticuffs. It was the trail’s defining conditions, its dangers, unfamiliarity, and isolation from comfortable and reassuring trappings of social prestige that exacerbated these tensions. The resulting contests reveal how different cultural meanings could swirl around trips and travel events often seen by historians as relatively straightforward moments in Europe’s colonial expansion. They also demonstrate how individuals of different backgrounds constructed themselves and their fellow travelers while on the trail.

The result is a picture of colonial-era travel and exploration as a mobile microcosm of the larger cultural encounter. The trail’s enforced close proximity and its inherent insecurity often put travelers on edge, enflamed conflicts within and between individuals, and made the colonial era’s cultural contest distinctly personal.

vi
FELLOW TRAVELERS:

INDIANS AND EUROPEANS TOGETHER ON THE EARLY AMERICAN TRAIL
INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000, big things were afoot in America, and one of the most curious, from an ethnohistorical standpoint, was the new gold colored dollar coin. Dollar coins have had a hard time replacing the vaunted greenback in Americans’ hearts and wallets, so each new attempt to introduce a coin provides a chance to select a new face for fiscal fame. The choice for the new turn-of-the-century coin was Lewis and Clark’s celebrated guide Sacajawea, in this incarnation gussied up to look more like a Hollywood starlet than a hardy woman of the early nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, the choice of Sacajawea is rich in significance. She was not the first woman on an American coin. Feminist and suffragist Susan B. Anthony adorned the last attempted dollar coin, and Lady Liberty has long been a coinage staple. Nor was Sacajawea the first native American on a coin. Pride of place belongs to the profile on the obverse of the buffalo nickel and the distinctly European-looking feathered head on the Indian head-penny. What makes this selection interesting was Sacajawea’s role in American history. There are many better-known Indian names and faces that might have been on a coin; Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, and Crazy Horse have all achieved iconic status for many Americans of non-Indian ancestry. But they, like many others, are best known for opposing the growth of the United States and consequently would make ironic, not to mention potentially memory-insulting, choices for a numismatic portrait. As Anglo-America’s patron saint of Indian guides, Sacajawea played exactly the type of role that
Americans can most easily officially celebrate. As the Corps of Discovery’s best remembered guide, she was an aide to expansion and, what is more, she participated in an expedition whose scientific stance and relative lack of violence make it a comfortable celebration choice for Americans still weary of the divisive squabbling that surrounded the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus’s 1492 landfall. What Sacajawea the icon makes clear is that Indians were central players in Europe’s exploration of America, not only as obstacles but as facilitators.

Sacajawea is only the most famous in a long line of Indians who, for one reason or another, traveled with Europeans. Indians provided the geographic knowledge and diplomatic skills that enabled the European exploration of the continent. Indian backs carried supplies and goods for European conquerors and traders, Indian arms pulled the paddles that brought missionaries into native villages, and Indian skills and stealth provided the food that nourished countless European explorers, clergymen, surveyors, and scientists. As scholars of America’s colonial past have become increasingly aware of the Indian role in shaping colonial era events and policies, the traditional image of the intrepid European pushing ever deeper into America’s wilderness has faded.

At first, one-time heroes became anti-heroes and a large and strident literature decried men from Columbus to Lewis and Clark as rapacious villains, taking everything they could lay their hands on and leaving nothing but contagion, war, slavery, and alcohol in their wake. This paper assault reached its height in the years around the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s Caribbean landfall in several books that rewrote the history of the conquest by reversing the characters’ traditional roles. The Italian “Bringer of Christ,” and many of those who followed in his wake were sizable targets for
Age of Exploration revisers. Scholars such as Kirkpatrick Sale and David Stannard succeeded in revealing what one historian called the “Darker Side of the Renaissance,” but there were lingering problems and limitations in the revision.¹ For one thing, they focused primarily on Spanish actions on Caribbean coasts and islands where the record of atrocity raised even contemporary eyebrows, and a long-standing Black Legend of Spanish cruelty was most provable. But while North America is far from free of its share of violence, duplicity, disease, and ignorance, easy villains have proven hard to pin down, or at least English-speaking America has been more willing to lament the sins of Spanish speakers than to look closely at its own past. The exploration of America north of Mexico was a slower and more plodding process than in Central South America, and largely lacked shocking Caribbeansque mass depopulations or stunning events like Pizarro’s Cajamarca get-rich-quick scheme. Consequently, the all-out assault of Sale, Stannard, and others has largely faltered on northern shores.

This is by no means to suggest that North American exploration was somehow a gentle, innocent, or benign process or that its study has been a sleepy backwater. Rather,

from a literary standpoint, its characters were less dramatic, its killings less breathtaking, and its implements less gruesome than seen in the Caribbean's bloody sixteenth century. Henry Hudson (for one example) may have been no less a villain than any greedy Spanish *encomendero*, but his quadrant and fur trading simply raise less popular ire than do the Iberian lance and the grilling rack. In fact, two of the highest profile popular studies of North American exploration—Stephen Ambrose’s best-selling *undaunted Courage* and Ken Burns’s film and companion book *Lewis and Clark*—were old-style celebrations of the Corp of Discovery’s manly heroics, and as far from the tone of the Columbian anniversary’s hand-wringing as possible. In the popular eye at least, colonization if cast as an intrepid reconnaissance can indeed put on a happy face.

Nevertheless, in the larger historiography, the stock of North America’s great explorers— from sixteenth-century navigators to eighteenth-century naturalists—has generally been on the decline, albeit at a slower rate than Columbus’s fall from historical grace. The scholarship of North American exploration has largely avoided the condemnatory tone of the quincentenary revisionists and instead focused more on the specific wheres and hows of conquest. The question of where particular explorers trod is one that has always had a prominent role in the field, and archaeologists’ and historians’ shared interest in the paths of explorers keeps the searches alive. A long modern paper trail follows the routes of the great North American explorers from Hernando de Soto to

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Sir Alexander Mackenzie. The methods of exploration also have recently received new scholarly attention. These new studies go well beyond mere tactics and planning and have focused on the colonial ideologies and discourses which exploration and European travel fostered and drew upon. These studies range from analyses of European possession rites and the discursive effects of cartography to close textual reading of the writings of individual travelers and explorers. Although the bulk of this creative new work has


focused primarily on nineteenth-century colonization, especially in Africa, an increasing number of North American scholars are taking up the lead. The growing ethnohistory of America’s native peoples’ colonial experience has also provided numerous critiques of the lingering effects of explorers and European travelers of all types. A bevy of scholars has demonstrated, in many ways and in various places, how diseases introduced by outlanders devastated native populations, how trade with gift-bearing strangers opened the door to new and unsettling economic systems, and how book-toting clergymen offered new beliefs to explain the changes they and their fellows helped bring about.5

Likewise, new studies focusing on the nature of resistance in a colonial setting have brought to the fore new kinds of voices and practices.

All of this work has little by little undermined the pillars upon which the great explorers, missionaries, cartographers, and men of science once stood. But the figure of Sacajawea symbolizes one especially important fact for this study: all of European exploration of America took place with Indian assistance. This can be an unsettling realization and may in part account for why the literature of American exploration has largely avoided the harshest rhetoric. The level and meaning of Indian complicity and cooperation in, and methods of resistance to, European expansion are central questions that any student of colonization must face. This is particularly true in colonial-era travel. For much of the colonial period there was little travel beyond the pale of European settlement without Indian aid. In light of this significant fact, it is no longer possible to picture intrepid European explorers and travelers without also envisioning their Indian companions leading the way, carrying the baggage, gathering the food, and providing needed information, while at other times blocking and misleading the way, and in all cases bringing to the trail their own assumptions and habits.

Between the time that Pánfilo de Narváez first sought out Timucuan food and guidance in the 1520s, and in the 1790s when Sir Alexander Mackenzie questioned his Athabascan companions about the best way over the Rockies and to the Pacific, countless Indians and Europeans traveled in each other's company. From early expeditions of European "discovery" to the eighteenth-century wanderings of scientists, surveyors, preachers, and traders, an unknowable number of Indians and Europeans walked the trail side-by-side, pulled the same canoe through the water, shared meals and shelter, and faced dangers in each other's company. But to date there has not been a systematic study...
of the types of relationships these intercultural fellow travelers formed while passing over rapids, portaging waterways, and tramping along the trail.\(^6\) The following chapters are an attempt to begin to fill this gap.

Travel was no easy feat for colonial-era travelers, and the shared risks and perils of even the shortest journeys set the stage for Indian and European travel relationships. Sea-going ships frequently smashed to splinters on unseen shoals and shallow sand banks or were torn apart by submerged obstacles.\(^7\) Indian canoes, though well designed and efficient craft, could become little more than bark or carved wood toys when hit with the full force of bad weather or rushing waters. When a “storm suddenly arose,” the light craft were tossed violently, upset, or even “split open,” causing crew and cargo to be thrown into the roiling waters.\(^8\) More than a few travelers, both native and European, drowned, sometimes within sight of friends and families who watched horrified, yet “without it being possible to render them any assistance.”\(^9\) Winter travel on northern lakes and rivers brought its own dangers. River ice frequently crushed canoes and small boats, leaving stranded boaters to drown or freeze or to float helplessly downstream on ice floes. Boats could become locked in ice, as did one French craft in 1758. The cold in

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\(^8\) Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* 73 vols. (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1896-1901), 10:89. Hereafter cited as *JR.*
the immobile boat was so severe that it caused the feet of nine crew members to become frostbitten, ultimately causing five of them to lose their feet entirely by amputation and two of those men to lose their lives as well.\textsuperscript{10}

Negotiating rapids and traveling near large waterfalls took special skills, but even the most experienced hands could only do so much in a crisis. Canoes got away from their handlers in the “violence of the current,” only to break apart in the rocks below.\textsuperscript{11} Upon seeing Niagara Falls’s misty heights and hearing its “roaring” din in 1793, Jacob Lindley also learned the twin stories of a “white man” who, “tumbled out of his canoe...and was hurled down” and of an Indian who, asleep in his canoe, “glided down into the rapids.” When the Indian realized his plight, he hopelessly “struck a few strokes with his paddle,” but seeing that there was nothing wood and muscle could do to reverse his course towards the fall’s high edge, he “wrapped his head in his blanket, and laid down in his canoe, to meet his horrid destiny.” As Lindley’s tale makes clear, this type of “horrid destiny” could await both white and red travelers.\textsuperscript{12}

Traveling by foot or on horseback was often no walk in the park either. In winter, blowing snows covered narrow paths which, as one observer wrote, “frequently

\textsuperscript{9} JR 32:137.
\textsuperscript{10} Sylvester Stevens, Donald Kent, and Emma Edith Woods, eds., Travels in New France (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), 104-105.
\textsuperscript{12} Jacob Lindley, “Expedition to Detroit,” Michigan Pioneer Historical Society, 17 (1890): 579. Lindley’s tale can be read in several ways. On one level, it is a story of double stereotyping: the awkward white man meeting his fate through his own incompetence and the lazy Indian snoozing towards his destiny. Lindley also adds a hint of anti-Indian treachery as an aside by suggesting that “it is supposed that” the canoe left the shore when “some wicked person loosed it.”
disappearing, leave the traveler in doubt and uncertainty as to the ways.”¹³ The unpredictable ice of frozen rivers and lakes sometimes “opened up” beneath traveler’s feet, causing them to be “swallowed up and lost in the water beyond the possibility of rescue.” Even far from water, winter travelers still ran the risk of freezing to death while huddled under a too-thin blanket or near a small campfire, even when snow and freezing rain did not “threaten to put out” a much-needed fire.¹⁴ Winter created a landscape devoid of food supplies, especially when hunting was poor or deep snow kept animals from moving about much. In such times travelers had to forage for what they could find and eat anything they could keep down, such as shoe leather, dried sinews from snowshoes, the bark of trees, decayed animal carcasses, and, on rare occasions, even one another. But one European traveler noted that, “when pressed with hunger,” even the most unappealing fare could take on the “the taste of bread and the substantial quality of fish.”¹⁵

Warm weather had its own plagues. American heat could get so intense that one Illinois headman warned a southbound French travelers that it could be “so excessive that it would inevitably cause [their] death.”¹⁶ In the arid Southwest, water supplies were always an important concern. When rivers were dry, “a hollowed out depression in one of the crags” along the trail frequently provided the only available water.¹⁷ Summer rains in other parts could be so heavy that animals and travelers became hopelessly “mired down”

¹³ JR 19:127.
¹⁴ JR 20:45.
¹⁶ JR 59:97.
¹⁷ Ernest Burrus, ed. and trans., Link’s Diary of his Expeditions to Northern Baja California (Los Angeles: Dawson’s Book Store, 1966), 49.
in thick, sticky mud. In lowland and swampy areas, waters could rise so quickly that a party could find itself “in water up to the knees or belly and at times up to the neck” with little warning. "Hordes of mosquitoes” could become so thick that they hardly allowed a traveler “to draw his breath” Dangerous animals of all types, from rattlesnakes to alligators, could kill or maim a traveler and otherwise disrupt travel. The same was true of two-legged menaces, both friend and foe. The fear of ambush from an enemy was rarely far from most North American travelers’ minds, but even one’s own companions could be a hazard. A Huron traveler learned this costly lesson when one of his companion’s muskets “went off” against the hapless Indian’s leg causing him to lose the mangled limb.

Facing these risks was an elemental part of travel. But there were dozens of more quotidian choices, decisions, and events that also faced a traveler. Where and when to camp, how best to provision a trip or which game to hunt, which path to take, and how and when to show divine reverence were all part of life on the trail. The complex social dimensions of common travel lay in navigating all of these choices and perils in the company of different people. With each new turn in the road, each new obstacle, and each new meal, fellow travelers had to choose whose ways would hold sway.

Making choices and bickering over which was the best way to solve a given problem provided travelers from different backgrounds and societies a valuable chance to

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18 George Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds., The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594 (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1966), 297.
21 JR 32:71.
witness the mettle of their fellows. Shared time on the trail provided Indians and Europeans the chance to see each other at close hand, to evaluate each other’s ways, and formulate opinions about who these strangers really were. These opinions and experiences informed the thoughts and prejudices of the folks at home by way of travel stories, oral or written, told by returning travelers. By providing people from different societies a setting and a context in which to observe one another, the trail served as colonization’s classroom.

This study draws on over two hundred travel, captivity, exploration, and missionary narratives from North America north of the Rio Grande dating between 1520 and 1800. This is a large and widely read literature, but like most period documentation, it is full of problems and surprises. Although the colonial era produced a voluminous literature of travel and exploration, the nineteenth century was the true heyday of the travel narrative. During the 1800s the writings of European wanderers exploring the edges of empires and describing all sorts of amusing natives and colonialist anecdotes regaled readers wherever books were available. Nevertheless, the colonial era’s narratives of travel, while not constituting as coherent a genre as what followed, and not being written for the same types of mass audiences, were nonetheless created for specific reasons and readers by specific types of travelers.

A few types of these travelers proved to be the most prolific writers. Consequently, much of what we know about colonial-era travel we see through their eyes. Territorial explorers, be they ambitious mariners like Jacques Cartier, restless soldiers like John Smith, or acquisitive fur traders like Samuel Hearne, often wrote detailed accounts of their travels as reports for backers at home, or simply to garner for
themselves as much praise and reward as they could. Missionaries of many European
countries and nations celebrated the events of their wanderings as a testament to their own
faith and missionary zeal, as admonitions to the less faithful, and as witnesses to the faith
of new converts. Eighteenth-century naturalists, and others adopting a scientific stance,
created detailed accounts of their findings in order to share their knowledge and
experience with kindred spirits. And on occasion the odd diarist, like the inexplicably
prolific planter William Byrd II, simply wrote from a love of the exercise. Because these
explorers, fur traders, missionaries, scientists, and colonial administrators recorded so
much colonial travel, they are by necessity the types of travelers who most commonly
appear in this study.

Likewise, it is the types of Indian travelers with which these Europeans had the
most contact who appear most often in the following chapters. Native societies no doubt
produced as many types of travelers as there were reasons to travel. A few are hinted at in
European documents. Pilgrims, merchants, and spiritual seekers all wandered native
America's myriad paths and waterways. But it was principally guides, hunters, porters,
and sundry companions who were best known to literarily-inclined European travelers,
and therefore became the best-documented native travelers of the colonial era. The
colonial dynamic surrounding these travels of conquest, trade, and missionizing is
unmistakable and unavoidable. The documentation of these many trips and the
relationships they describe are themselves the products of colonization.

Much of the colonial travel literature is anecdotal, and that literary fact has
significantly shaped the following chapters. No single traveler experienced and wrote
about every type of travel occurrence. Consequently, comparisons over large time periods
and over great distances achieve coherence through the idea of the trail and travel as a unique arena of colonial interaction. The historian's favorite questions of chronology and change over time are tricky components of this sort of vignette-heavy cultural history study. To be sure, some aspects of travelers' relationships did change over time. The equipment that travelers carried, for example changed as Indians and Europeans borrowed and appropriated what they liked in each other's travel kits. As time passed musket totting mounted Indians were as common on the trail as were moccasin- or snowshoe-clad Europeans eating parched corn and carrying protective snakeroot. Indians and Europeans also gradually learned each other's languages, closing some communication gaps, but also opening others. Another example of change over time is the decline in physical coercion of Indian guides after the sixteenth century. Also, Indians and Europeans gradually became more familiar with each other in general, thus changing the nature of their interactions and refining the demands they could make upon each other. But at the same time, so much of the travel experience, the confrontation of travel risks, the tensions inherent in choosing whose travel rules to follow, and the process of engaging with, testing, and evaluating travel companions (all within the context of colonization)—remained roughly the same over the whole colonial era—or at least similar enough for the entire era to fit into one study. Change over time is also difficult to assess

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for individual peoples or societies because the documents usually offer only one glimpse of a particular people at one particular moment. While the documents may offer a clear glimpse, for example, of some Florida natives’ responses to travel with Spanish conquistadores, they do not offer a similarly clear view of how the same peoples took to traveling with Europeans a century later. The focus of travel writers had moved elsewhere by that time.

Therefore, this study employs a kind of de facto frontier focus. In order for a travel story to make it into these chapters, two things had to have happened. The first was that a literarily inclined European had to have traveled with an Indian. The second is that their common experiences had to be recorded. These two criteria were met most often at the edges of European American settlement.

Although a large-scale study of travel relationships has been lacking to date, there has been no shortage of work studying certain types of colonial-era travelers. Of specific interest here is the recent growing interest in those Indians and Europeans who could move across social boundaries and thus became valuable instruments of diplomacy and trade. The literature studying these middlemen (and women), go-betweens, or cultural brokers, (to list just a few of their appellations) has recently become large and coherent enough so as to constitute a specific cultural broker approach. Although there has long been interest in figures such as Sacajawea or Pennsylvania Indian diplomat Conrad

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24 The concept of the frontier has been falling out of favor in recent years. For an overview of how the concept still fits into colonial Indian relations scholarship, see Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, “Introduction: On the Connection of Frontiers,” in Cayton and Teute, eds., Contact Points: American Frontiers from the
Wieser, older studies saw such people as interesting frontier characters and made little attempt to see them as part of a larger colonial phenomenon.\textsuperscript{25} The new cultural broker studies seek specifically to draw connections between Indians and European middlemen.\textsuperscript{26}

Much of the cultural broker literature builds on the ideas and themes outlined in two key articles from the late 1980s. The first was J. Frederick Fausz's 1987 "Middlemen in Peace and War: Virginia's Earliest Indian Interpreters," which studies the careers of three young Englishmen sent by the seventeenth-century Virginia colony to learn the local Powhatans' Algonkian tongue and serve as intermediaries. Fausz concluded that their important role left them conversant in both English and Indian ways, but at the same time not wholly trusted in either community. In Fausz's eyes, the three middlemen's "cultivation of seemingly ambiguous and ambivalent loyalties made them the most consistently misunderstood and mistrusted people of all."\textsuperscript{27} This theme of marginalization, both as a result and a facilitator of cultural brokerage, is one that remained vibrant in later work.


\textsuperscript{26} For other reviews of the cultural broker literature, see Szasz, \textit{Between Indian and White Worlds}, 3-20, and Morgan "Encounters, 1500-1800," 53. Morgan sees some of the key brokerage questions as yet unanswered.

The second key piece was Daniel Richter’s 1988 “Cultural Brokers and Intercultural Politics: New York-Iroquois Relations, 1664-1701.” In this article Richter employed a model inspired in part by Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory to study how colonial-Indian diplomacy flowed through cultural brokers possessed of networks of access into both societies. Richter described the “brokers or mediators” as being simultaneously “members of one or more interacting networks (kin groups, political factions, communities, or formal or informal coalitions)” who “provide nodes of communication,” while also guarding the “synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole.” For Richter, these abilities and connections made cultural brokers “indispensable to all sides” in New York-Iroquois colonial era relations. Richter’s vision of the broker as point of connection drew heavily on node theory sociology, which worked well with Wallerstein’s world system. Although world systems analysis did not become a central part of all subsequent cultural broker work, Richter’s use of node theory, and the vision of culture it posits, has become bedrock social theory for later brokerage scholars.

Two other significant methodological contributions came from anthropologist James A. Clifton. In his 1989 collection of essays entitled Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers, Clifton and his collaborators solidified the biographical model as one of the preferred ways to closely examine cultural brokers. They also portrayed the brokerage and the between-worlds lives of brokers as a

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frontier phenomenon. Subsequent cultural broker studies have generally employed some combination of social node thinking, a biographical approach, frontier setting, and the vision of brokers as outsiders. Margaret Connell Szasz’s 1994 *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* brought together a number of scholars to study the lives and brokerages of people as diverse as Andrew Montour, a diplomatically influential Pennsylvania mixed-blood man and buckskin-clad Wild-West showman Buffalo Bill Cody. Szasz’s essayists did not restrict brokerage to the distant past, and instead covered the lives and doings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures. These figures led lives at both the physical and cultural edges of their worlds, thus fitting Richter’s use of node theory and Clifton’s use of the frontier into the biographical framework. Szasz’s opening essay was the first historical piece to fully outline cultural brokerage and suggest that it was time for these figures to receive their scholastic due. In a similarly styled book published in the same year, Frances Karttunen took on the same mission by studying the lives of over two dozen brokers from all over the Americas and from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. But in all her essays, Karttunen emphasized the marginal nature of her subjects and concluded that their stories reveal much about “the special perspective of the marginalized.”

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The best known and most recent cultural broker study is James Merrell’s 1999 *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier.* Merrell focused on the work of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania’s career intercultural diplomats. The book brought together many of the themes common to cultural broker literature. He covered the marginalization of brokers as well as the vision of these men (they were mostly men) as frontier figures. Merrell eschewed biography in order to paint a picture of what it was like to conduct frontier diplomacy during the bloody middle years of the eighteenth century. But in general he adhered to the social node theory view of cultures as discreet and contained entities. One of Merrell’s most significant contributions to the cultural broker discussion (and one that is particularly important for this study) is his discussion of travel as central to the brokerage experience.

The cultural broker approach has brought important aspects of Indians’ colonial experience to light. It has also helped to demonstrate the centrality of Indians during the colonial era by exploring aspects of diplomacy and interaction that were often previously overlooked. Thanks to this body of writing, the names of many of the era’s most respected Indian and European diplomatists are beginning to get the kind of scholarly attention traditionally reserved for the governors they treated with and for. The approach also brings up important questions about how different groups interact when in close contact. But like any approach, the cultural broker model has its limitations. In many respects, the travelers discussed in the following chapters would be prime candidates for

a cultural broker analysis. After all, many of the people mentioned in this study also appear in cultural broker approach writings. Much of the supporting documentation is the same. Travel and the trail were certainly places for the type of mediations cultural broker scholars study. And, like many of those studies, this one also maintains a frontier focus. But the following chapters deviate from the cultural broker approach in a few key ways.

Most colonial-era brokerage studies follow the long-standing trend of focusing on the official and diplomatic side of Indian-colonial relations. Brokers served as translators, intermediaries, and peacemakers, and the great achievement of the cultural broker literature is that at last these often-overlooked players are beginning to get their full scholarly due. But their numbers were few and their influence rarely felt far from the treaty ground or colonial capitol. Many brokers were vital and skilled diplomatists and as such were instrumental in bringing tribes and colonies together as peoples. But as the literature is starting to acknowledge, a far larger number of Indians and Europeans indulged in their own personal forms of cultural brokerage in ways that had little to do with the official workings of councils and congresses. These brokerages took place at trade fairs, in public houses, in encampments, and the countless places where Indians and Europeans could have met each other as individuals. The trail was one of the most instructive of these many settings. The cultural broker approach has paved the way for studies of the ramifications of the interpersonal interactions of those Indians and Europeans who dealt with one another but did so not as specially skilled or uniquely positioned brokers, but as regular people. This study tries to go farther down that path but also with a key theoretical difference.

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33 Merrell, *Into the American Woods.*

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Brokerage studies tend to see individual Indians and Europeans as standing at the edges of their worlds and sharing a conceptual space, almost like the overlapping circles of a ven diagrams (a device sometimes used by node theorists). As Nancy Hagedorn wrote, quoting in part Margaret Szasz, brokers became "repositories of two or more cultures," often using their multicultural knowledge and understanding to forge bonds and build bridges across the cultural divide." It is this shared edge, this being in two worlds at one time, that for some brokers accounts for their marginalization, while for others it is a vehicle for status and gain. Brokers also often appear as gatekeepers, who offer access into cultural centers to those from outside the node. This is particularly true of those studies that go beyond the colonial era. Seen this way, cultures are, by implication, wholes, of which these individuals are parts in varying degrees. Culture is something they can be possessed of, or serve as conduits into. The problem with this vision of culture is that it presupposes a pure, complete, and unified cultural object for individuals to be more or less a part of. Such a vision usually relies on traits such as shared ideas, practices, and beliefs as the glue that creates the cohesion within a culture. But cultures are typified by conflict, dissension, and disagreement as much as by sharing and commonality. More importantly, individuals participate unevenly in a culture—seeing things their own (culturally informed) way, possessing different types of knowledge and experiences, and seeing their interests differently. Viewed this way, brokers cannot provide access to a culture—they can only provide access to their own personal view of that culture informed

by their own life experiences, and habits. Indeed, no one in any culture group could do any differently.\textsuperscript{35}

Therefore, rather than seeing historical actors as conduits in or out of cultures, it becomes vital to focus on individuals shaped by their societies and possessed of their own experiences meeting with others of different backgrounds, assumptions, habits, ways, and experiences. Each of these meetings offers new possibilities, and brings new ideas and practices into each participant’s experiences. Viewed this way, intercultural encounters are moments of evaluation and assessment, out of which selves and others are created within the framework of ever-changing personal contexts. This study avoids an abstract culture concept as much as possible, and instead looks at how European and Indian individuals interacted; what habits, beliefs, and practices they brought to those encounters; and how they learned to be selves through friendly and hostile meetings.\textsuperscript{36}

Through common travel, these people broadened their base of possibilities by seeing and learning new habits and practices. Travel together allowed Indians and Europeans to witness and evaluate the efficacy of others’ different habits, and thereby to pick and

\textsuperscript{35} Of all the cited works, Daniel Richter’s shows the greatest understanding of this complexity. Richter cited one piquant handling of just this problem by one of ethnohistory’s best practitioners, see Bruce Trigger, \textit{Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s “Heroic Age” Reconsidered} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 169-71. Trigger here also addresses the difficulty ethnohistorians face in treating Indians subjects as individuals. He suggests, and Richter follows, a use of interest groups to make sense of divisions within societies.

choose what to adopt for themselves and what to reject. This process was always about being one’s own best self within one’s own socially informed concept of individuality, and never a process of moving closer to or farther away from a cultural center. Contest and competition are at the core of this process and consequently this study emphasizes those moments on the trail.37

This vision in some respects reverses the flow of node-based studies. Instead of seeing individuals as representatives of cultures, this study attempts to portray them as the locus of a history of individualized, socially informed habits which were always in flux as individuals learned or rejected new ways of living in and understanding their worlds. While these assumptions inform this study, the following chapters are not intended as a full-fledged exploration of the relevant social theory.

This study focuses on a few aspects of travel relationships that were central to Indian-European common travel during the colonial era. The first two chapters examine the dilemmas, motivations, and rewards facing Indians traveling with Europeans. Chapter One, “Chains” looks at the experiences of Indians who were taken captive by sixteenth-century European mariners and armies of exploration. These were some of the most coercive travel relationships of the era, and yet even in the harshest captivity Indians found their own ways to make sense and the best of their plights. One of the central paradoxes facing these early guides was that while they were nominally prisoners, their role as guides and Europeans’ invariable geographic ignorance combined to grant these chained Indians considerable power over their captors.

37 See Fabian Out of Our Minds, 1-22. Fabian emphasizes the disjunction inherent in nineteenth-century African colonization and its literature. This study of trail life attempt
Chapter Two, "Rewards" continues to look at the motivations and ambitions of Indian guides, hunters and porters. After the sixteenth century, the power of economics, alliances, and personal connection pushed Indians into traveling with Europeans. But many Indians of different societies and stations had varying reasons to travel with Europeans. Their motivations ranged from material gain to maintaining traditional social status. Indians' various motivations for accompanying Europeans complicates the traditional picture of exploration, in part, by revealing the many contradictory meanings built into trips often seen as simple explorations.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters focus in more detail on the interpersonal dynamic between Indian and European travel companions. Conflict, contest, and competition characterized so much of fellow travelers' time together, and these chapters each deal in different ways with components of these competitive relationships. Chapter Three, "Control" looks at the ways travelers worked to assert the primacy of their own beliefs and habits when they were challenged, either by a trailside event or a travel companion. The second half of the chapter retells the stories of two European explorers—one well known, Samuel Champlain, and the other somewhat more obscure, Samuel Hearne—in order to show how questions of authority played out on the trail and how small personal disputes could determine the course of an expedition and in turn affect larger colonial events. Chapter Four, "Rattlesnakes" is a case study examining how a trailside crisis, in this case an encounter with a rattlesnake, could have very different meanings for fellow travelers, and how encountering both the crisis and each other's ways of coping with crises, shaped common travel. The final chapter, "Together" to align with his stated mission of moving beyond resistance studies to look at the chaotic
explores how Indians and Europeans tested each other in order to see their fellows' mettle and the utility of their travel habits. This chapter focuses on moments other than crises when the consequences of disagreement were less dramatic.

When Indians and Europeans traveled together, they both brought own their own methods and ideas to the trail. The trail in turn provided them with the chance to see each other at work and to make assessments about one another and the relative worth of their values, ideas and habits. In this way, travel and exploration were far more than getting from point A to point B; they were also the cutting edge of the entire Indian-European colonial encounter.
CHAPTER ONE

CHAINS

The sounds of clanking armor and horses’ hooves trampling the dying corn told the man and woman hiding in the field that their race was run. The sight of the two hungry, sweaty, and dirty strangers now in front of them must have been as overwhelming as the din of the soldier’s barked-out incomprehensible questions and threats. Whether through gestures or the menacing waving of a corn stalk, the Indian woman somehow understood the solders’ demands, despite a language gulf as wide as the Atlantic itself. Food. She led them to where the women of Aguacaleyquen had cached the collected bounty which they had carefully tended all summer. The loss of this food supply could mean that her people would have to go hungry, some may even starve. They would be weak and vulnerable to their enemies. There may not even be enough seed to plant a new crop for the next season. Corn was life. But it was also life to Hernando de Soto and his army of over six hundred who had been living on dwindling supplies for days. If anyone thanked the Aguacaleyquen woman for her sacrifice, Rodrigo Ranjel, the woman’s captor and the event’s chronicler, did not record it.

Meanwhile, the Indian man faced his own terrible choice. The words of demand and coercion are lost but the result is not. The Indian showed a Spanish captain where seventeen of his fellow villagers had hidden themselves from the invasion that was suddenly undoing their world. Soto’s secretary described the results of the seizure, a
seizure that was largely unremarkable from the Spanish point of view, noting with satisfaction that the seventeen included the daughter of the cacique of Aguacaleyquen. Her capture was fortunate because "it seemed reasonable that this would make her father come in peace." The cooperation of the cacique was essential. Soto and other conquistadors had learned that carrying a ruler through his own territory greatly enhanced the chances that the Spaniards and their retinue would get through the land, expeditiously, safely, and well fed. When possible the soldiers brought local chiefs with them as guides, either by threats and deception or by making a friend of a leader by promising to march against his enemies. When no chief was around, Soto was happy to rely on the word of the first captive to tell a good and useful story.

The first relationships in the history of Indian and European common travel often began with the type of raid Soto's men performed at Aguacaleyquen. In time, the somewhat softer coercive forces of trade, alliances, and obligation would all play roles in shaping colonial era travel relationships. Even so, sixteenth-century exploration often employed a particularly heavy hand. For Europeans, the very newness of the seemingly endless continent, the strangeness of its people, and the hit-and-run inexactitude of renaissance exploration, combined with the ambitions and characters of the era's

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38 David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), xix. Weber states that Hernando de Soto would have been known to his contemporaries as "Soto" and not "De Soto," as most modern Americans know him. Although Weber prefers to stick with the more common "De Soto," I prefer to follow Patricia Galloway's lead and use the Spanish form "Soto."
explorers to create singularly harsh exploration strategies. Kidnapping Indians was one commonly employed part of these strategies. Lamenting the failings of the star-crossed, one-eyed conquistador Pánfilo de Narváez, contemporary chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo rhetorically asked posterity, “what greater crime can a leader commit than to lead people into a land that neither he nor another of his group had ever been in before?” Despite his no-doubt unintended critique of the whole colonial endeavor, Oviedo voiced a fundamental problem that faced all colonial-era European travelers in America—but one that was of particular concern to the sixteenth-century’s first wave of European explorers and colonizers.

Every early 1500s traveler, from the conquistador to the sea dog, relied almost entirely on Indian information to get around America’s still largely unfamiliar coasts, estuaries, and savannas. Without effective and well-informed guidance, one was sure to become lost and even meet with disaster. But acquiring reliable native travel aid was a constant problem. Sixteenth-century European exploration was marked by a pronounced willingness, even an active desire in some cases, to take Indians captive and to use them as guides, informants, and promotional exhibits for American exploration. From Columbus on, virtually all of the sixteenth-century’s voyages of exploration were also voyages of kidnapping.

There is no way to estimate the numbers of Indians Europeans procured in this manner. But the kidnapped guide leading men back to his or her old country and the reportedly willing native offering information and assistance are recurring figures in the

40 For an integration of Renaissance ideas and American colonization, see Mignolo, The Darker Side of the Renaissance.
early exploration literature. For their part, coerced or captive Indian guides faced an almost paralyzing dilemma. Aiding foreign armies or mariners might be a protection against immediate harm—but at what cost? The loss of friends, kinsfolk, or countrymen could all possibly result from cooperation, while defiance brought with it a quick ending. Captive Indian guides often realized that they were in fact in charge of the course of a large, hungry, and violent body of men who really had no idea where they were, where they were going, or even where they wanted to go. In some cases, captive guides did indeed help their captors along their way. In other cases, guides worked to undermine and harm an expedition. In still other situations, captive Indians simply lacked the geographic knowledge to be capable guides in the first place. But whether captive guides intended to aid or to trick their captors, they all shared a potentially life-threatening position.

Whether held in chains by Spanish soldiers or sequestered in a French, English, or Dutch galleon, Indian captives in the sixteenth century did what they could to turn a bad situation to good ends in ways that made sense both circumstantially and in larger cultural contexts. For some, this entailed using their superior geographic knowledge to undermine and devastate an expedition. For others it meant finding traditional meanings and opportunities in the midst of a mobile European onslaught or using alliances to protect their own people. But while captive natives tried to improve their lot and comprehend their experiences, they did not all agree on just how to do that. Differing ideas about how to best cope with captivity could turn fellow captives into enemies. Most captive guides were left unnamed in the captors’ records. Yet some of the highest-profile captives became the subjects of considerable documentation. These few natives may have

41 David Beers Quinn, ed., New American World: A Documentary History of North
lived in different times and places, spoken different languages, and seen the world through very different eyes, but they were linked by a common experience of captivity. Their experiences, both typical and unique, serve as the best windows into how captive men and women carried their burdens.

Soto’s tactics at Aguacaleyquen and dozens of other towns were certainly the stuff of which black legends were made. But Soto and his infamous fellow conquistadors were not the only European travelers and explorers to obtain native assistance by force and compulsion. The multinational wave of sixteenth-century mariners poking at America’s edges often hauled Indians aboard ship either to bring them home as living souvenirs for the promotion of colonizing efforts, to sell them at slave markets, to dragoon them into serving as ship’s pilot, or to serve some other purpose.

During Europe’s age of discovery, as many as two thousand Indians crossed the Atlantic in European bottoms, the majority destined for lives as slaves. When America was still a novelty to Europeans, captive Indians could be fascinating human mementos of the New World and dozens of Indians dazzled the Old World’s commoners and nobles. John Cabot returned from his 1497 discovery of North America with three Newfoundland Americans to 1612, 5 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 2:62.

42 The Black Legend—the vision of the Spanish as singularly cruel by nature—has had mixed fortunes in the literature of American colonization. England and France were quick to exploit the propaganda potential of the colonial condemnations of Spanish observers such as Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas. See A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, ed. and trans., Nigel Griffin, intro., Anthony Pagden (London: Penguin, 1992). In recent years a form of the Black Legend has resurfaced in scholarship that examines just how destructive was the conquest of the Indies. Most notable among this work is Sale, The Conquest of Paradise. See also Stannard American Holocaust and Wilson, The Earth Shall Weep for modern work indebted to Black Legend themes and attempts to extend it to all European nations.
Beothuks whom he presented to King Henry VII. These captives survived in England and at the turn of the sixteenth-century were walking about Westminster Palace “appareled after the manner of Englishmen.” In 1535 Plymouth adventurer William Hawkins also returned to Blighty with Indian captives, including “one of the savage kings of the country of Brasill.” This Indian man, resplendent in native garb and facial piercings, quickly became an object of fascination and had a personal audience with Henry VIII. Inspired by Hawkins’s novel human cargo, London lawyer Richard Hore soon set off with a group of well-heeled associates specifically to bring back an Indian and present him to King Henry. Hore’s poor planning and his companions’ general lack of maritime experience led to failure in the icy waters off Newfoundland. After watching a few Eskimo kayaks easily outpace their clunky ship’s boat, the expedition’s dwindling supplies drove the would-be kidnappers to turn to cannibalistic succor. Finally, by eating a few of their companions and then capturing a French fishing vessel, the party’s survivors returned to England, sick of the sea and without captives.

Captive Indians may have been alluring novelties worthy of trip across the sea, but they could also be more than mere living keepsakes to European sailors. While scouting North Carolina’s Outer Banks in 1524, the French sailors of Giovanni de Verrazzano’s La Dauphine tried to grab an Algonquian woman about eighteen to twenty years old, the children accompanying her, and her elderly female companion “to carry back to France.” Only the young woman’s flailing and screaming saved her from an

ignominious fate, although the Frenchmen did manage to make off with a young boy in her care. The sailors’ plans for the young woman were starkly suggested by Verrazzano’s description of the woman as being “very beautiful and tall” and the abductors’ comparative lack of interest in the old woman. In 1578 Martin Frobisher’s English seamen easily captured two Canadian Eskimo women because they were not “so apt to escape as the men were.” The sailors were horrified by the appearance of the older of the two whom they believed to be “eyther a Divill, or a witche.” Expecting to see that she had “cloven” feet, the men “plucked off her buckskins” and then let her go, preferring to keep only her younger companion. Ships’ masters knew that the ardors of exploration could be mitigated by keeping a “captive woman for the comfort of the men.”

For navigators charting terra incognita, regional geographic information was always at a premium, and many early European explorers were more than ready to use force or coercion to get the facts they needed from local natives who were after all the only available sources of information. In most cases these captured guides did brief duty serving to direct mariners to a nearby source of water or food and then making their own way. This widely used tactic was largely effective for finding local points of interest and for short term guidance, but it did sometimes backfire. When Henry Hudson’s men tried to detain some New York Algonquians, these unwilling guides simply waited their

45 Hakluyt, Principal Navigations, 8:3-7.
moment and literally jumped ship. Rather than getting reliable guides, Hudson’s actions only deepened the Indians’ growing dislike for the men in ships. As Hudson sailed off guideless, the natives yelled their “scorn” to the Half Moon and its crew. Frobisher found himself embroiled in a see-sawing game of hostage-taking, which heated up hostilities and even earned the sea dog a well placed Eskimo arrow in his posterior. In some cases Indian captives succumbed to European diseases and simply died, like the Eskimo hostage John Davis’s men took in July 1586. Coercion could yield some cursory data of the immediate area, but it was generally not a good basis for long-term cooperative relationships needed for long-distance exploration.

When hostages did not escape, rebel, or die, explorers hoped to turn them into full-time guides and translators through a crash course in European “civilization.” Adventurers quickly saw the advantages in taking back to Europe a select captive—usually a lad who showed some willingness or who was given by a chief as bond of friendship. Like the Indians at Henry VII’s court, these captive Indians were objects of fascination, but they also were prime candidates to become bilingual, geographically savvy guides for the next cross-Atlantic expedition. Consequently, capturing a native became an official standard maritime practice, just like map-making or taking soundings.

Taking a captive was not always as easy as simply grabbing a likely candidate and sailing off. Europeans sometimes turned Indian curiosity into a vehicle for capturing new informants. Offers of gifts and food, combined with a desire to know more about these hairy and smelly strangers were often enough to get some Indians aboard ship. But once there, some prospective guides had to be tricked into staying on board as demonstrated by

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48 Donald S. Johnson, ed., Charting the Sea of Darkness: The Four Voyages of Henry
a French crew who used food and wine to lull a chief into submission.\textsuperscript{49} Even the best coaxing sometimes failed. In 1567 Frenchman René de Laudonnière and his men used sweet words, friendly actions, and gifts of clothing to calm the fears and sorrows of two Florida Indians given to the Frenchmen by a local chief. The two Indians shrewdly refused the proffered gifts, perceiving that accepting them would represent a form of contract further binding them to go to France. After a few days of sailing along the coast, the two captives gradually stopped singing their mournful songs and began to chat and exchange vocabularies with their new hosts. But just as all seemed to be going along well, the two quietly slipped away in one of the ship's smaller boats “leaving behinde them the apparel which the Captaine had given them, and carrying away nothing but that which was their own.”\textsuperscript{50}

Yet there were “successes” with this type of relatively friendly captivity. When Jacques Cartier floated into Saint Lawrence Bay near the Gaspé Peninsula in 1534, he met a group of local Iroquoians summering at a traditional fishing village. After a friendly meeting and gift exchange the chief Donnacona, according to Cartier, offered two of his sons, Taignoagny and Domagaia, as a way to cement their budding alliance. These young men sailed to France with Cartier and the following year joined the ranks of the few Indians who survived Europe and returned home, this time to Canada as French and Iroquoian bilingual guides. Taignoagny and Domagaia directed Cartier up the Saint Lawrence, pointing out such highlights as the Saguenay River whose promise of copper wealth would drive future French settlement in the region. Near Île d'Orléans the

\textsuperscript{49} See James Axtell, “Imagining the Other: First Encounters in North America,” in Beyond 1492, 64-67.

\textsuperscript{50} Hudson (New York: Kondansha International, 1993), 118, 120.
returning sons reunited with their father and people amidst great signs of joy and affection. After further exploring the river valley and testing the alliance with Donnacona by insisting on visiting his up-river rivals at Hochelaga, Cartier finally returned to France, this time bringing with him not only Taignoagny and Domagaia but also Donnacona himself, as well as several other Indians. The whole group of Iroquoians never saw Canada again and lived out the rest of their foreshortened lives under French roofs.51

In a similar story set fifty years later, Arthur Barlowe, an English mariner and member of Sir Walter Raleigh's American exploration team, returned from his 1584 scouting voyage to North Carolina's Outer Banks with two "lustie men" named Manteo and Wanchese.52 The two came from different parts of the Albermarle and Pamlico Sound areas and no record survives describing how they came into English hands. After wining and dining in London and extended language lessons with Thomas Harriot (the result of which was a new Harriot-devised alphabet with which to transcribe Carolina Algonquian words), these two world travelers returned to their native land the following year as a valuable pair of uniquely able guides.

50 Hakluyt, Principal Navigations, 8:467.
51 Ramsay Cook, ed., The Voyages of Jacques Cartier (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 87; see also Cook, "Donnacona Discovers Europe: Rereading Jacques Cartier's Voyages," in Voyages of Jacques Cartier; Prins, "To the Land of the Mistigoches," 184. This information about Donnacona's fate comes from the somewhat questionable André Thevet.
But Manteo and Wanchese harbored very different attitudes towards their English masters. Wanchese took the first opportunity to escape the English and return to his old life, becoming a powerful voice urging Indian attacks on his former captors and even taking an active role in those attacks. Manteo, on the other hand, maintained a notable loyalty to his English friends and was a trustworthy and useful guide to them as they explored the area around Roanoke Island. Manteo provided valuable intelligence about the courses of waterways and the villages to be found along them. He accompanied the English on many of these trips as an important go-between, urging local Indians that the strangers meant no harm and translating native songs and speech for his allies. In time his faithfulness was rewarded with the governorship of the Pamilco Sound area. Although largely symbolic and certainly unenforceable, Manteo’s grant made him the first native to receive such a high office from English benefactors.

It is difficult to account for the differences in Manteo’s and Wanchese’s attitudes towards the English. On the surface the two young men seem so similar, and yet their responses to their situations could not have been more opposed. One possible explanation may be that their responses more or less paralleled those of their own peoples. Manteo hailed from Croatoan on Hatteras Island where his mother ruled. These people and the struggling English colony maintained friendly relations with the significant exception of an August 9, 1587, incident when soldiers of painter-turned-ill-suited colonial governor John White accidentally killed a group of foraging Croatoans, having mistaked them for

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53 Kupperman, Roanoke, 74-75. Kupperman identifies Wanchese as being a Roanoke and Manteo as being from Croatoan. Michael Leroy Oberg, Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism and Native America, 1585-1685 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 26 claims that Wanchese may have been an advisor to the Roanoke chief Wingina.
enemies. English regional interests generally focused away from outlying Croatoan and towards the mainland, allowing these people to reap the benefits of trade and alliances with the English while sitting back and watching as their new friends pushed in the opposite direction of their small spit of sandy island. And of course Manteo’s faithful service helped to keep him and his people in English good graces.

The Roanokes and other mainland tribes just west of Roanoke Island, on the other hand, bore the brunt of English territorial and provisioning demands and suffered the worst from European diseases. Roanoke Island was part of their land and unsurprisingly, these people were among the first locals to turn against the new arrivals. One-time friends like Roanoke chief Wingina led a highly successful sustained assault on the English that with little exaggeration can be credited with ending England’s hopes on the island. Wanchese was himself a Roanoke and in a unique position to inform his friends about his former captor’s weaknesses. When and why Manteo and Wanchese developed their contrasting attitudes is unknowable. Perhaps it was connected to the unknown circumstances whereby they both became captives. Perhaps it stemmed from when they shared information with Harriot in London, Wanchese seeing that Manteo’s descriptions sparked English interest in the landward side of sounds, thereby threatening Wanchese’s people more than Manteo’s. The answers to these questions are lost to time, and more

54 Quinn, First Colonists, 101.
56 Quinn, Set Fair for Roanoke, 235. Quinn argues that Manteo was from a ruling family, whereas Wanchese was probably just a warrior, He believes that “it seems very likely
frustratingly perhaps lost when English sailors dumped Harriot’s journals into Pamlico Sound during Ralph Lane’s abandonment of the first Roanoke colony. Whatever their reasons, Manteo’s and Wanchese’s responses show that captive guides could see differing opportunities in their superficially similar captivities.⁵⁷

Initial native good will, fascination with the new arrivals, and the Indian practice of securing alliances through exchanging captives contributed to French and English mariners’ ability to take native informants like Taignoagny, Domagaia, Wanchese, and Manteo without bloodshed or too much calculated deception. But although the experiences of these somewhat exceptional guides do not include the type of overt brutality many captured Indians faced, their relationships with Europeans at least began as captivities, even if they evolved into something more complex and complicitous during the course of their relationships. While well treated, clothed, and fed, these Indians were after all subjected to restrictions on their movements and actions that had no real precedent in native societies. In Europe they were objects of curiosity to all who saw that Wanchese was treated as an inferior by Manteo” and that Wanchese was generally a less helpful informant than Manteo. Although Quinn does not address this issue, Manteo’s elevated status may have given him more detailed geographic knowledge than that held by the warrior Wanchese.⁵⁷ Quinn, Set Fair for Roanoke, 233-37. Quinn asserts that Manteo went with Barlowe “out of interest and curiosity” (233) and that he “almost certainly went to England in 1584 of his own volition” (235). He also claims that Wanchese may have been given to the English by the ailing Wingina or Granganimeo to keep an eye on the English. The documentation on these questions is sparse and the difficulty with Quinn’s assertions is that he attempts to explain the beginning of Manteo’s and Wanchese’s English experience by extrapolating from the experience itself. Captivity, however forceful or gentle, does not automatically disqualify the possibility of later friendship. Rather than looking at the tenor of Manteo’s relationship with his captors and thereby determining that subsequent cooperation indicated that Manteo was initially willing to go with Barlowe, it makes more sense to look at how Europeans of the time generally took captives. Viewed this way, it is likely that Manteo’s curiosity earned him a cross-Atlantic
them and served as living posterboards for raising funds and interests in colonial endeavors. Their captors also hoped that these Indians would see firsthand the manifest superiority of European civilization and upon their return to their native lands become advocates for their captors’ way of life and then willing agents of colonialism. Even though these captives may have stepped willingly aboard ship, as the European chroniclers would like us to believe, there is little reason to suspect that they understood the nature or the extent of the bargain they were entering.

Taking captives was a widespread European practice. But, the great sixteenth-century North American Spanish *entradas* were something unique in the annals of exploration creating their own pressures on captive guides while simultaneously providing distinct opportunities. Like many aspects of Iberian New World colonization, the *entrada* had its roots in Spain’s long war with Islam. Unable to fund large armies, Spanish kings relied instead on prominent men of good lineage and impressive military credentials to field their own private armies. These armies conquered in a monarch’s trip that he never bargained for. That he used this situation to his advantage is a testament to his own creativity and adaptability.

58 Neal Salisbury “Squanto: Last of the Patuxets,” in Sweet and Nash, _Struggle and Survival in Colonial America_, 214-227. Salisbury briefly takes up this theme in discussing the life of Squanto, who had traveled to Spain and England before the arrival of the Pilgrim settlers.

59 Like other colonial powers, the Spanish also took native captives to serve as guides. Captive women served as the first guides for Soto, although not for long. One of the best documented cases was that of Don Luis, the Virginia Powhatan who served as guide for the 1570 Jesuit mission to Jacan, believed to have been on the York River in Virginia. Don Luis’s story mirrors that of Wanchese. He lived among the Spanish for ten years but upon return to his homeland fled back to his people, helping them kill the Jesuits and end Spanish colonization in the region. There is some scholarly speculation, based on very thin evidence, that a young Don Luis may have become the older Opechancanough, the skillful belligerent Pamunkey chief. See Charlotte M. Gradie “The Powhatans in the Context of the Spanish Empire,” in Rountree, _Powhatan Foreign Relations, 1500-1722_.

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name without reaching into his purse. The rewards for the leaders and members of these armies were great. Land, wealth, and titles went to men who achieved great things; consequently, there was no shortage of soldiers willing to try their luck at becoming rich and titled. The entrada turned out also to be ideal for colonization. Throughout the sixteenth century private armies, specially recruited, driven forward by their own ambitions, and fueled by the stunning success of men like Hernando Cortés and the Pizarro brothers fanned out all across the Americas. In the lead were men hoping to find their own golden kingdoms to conquer while the rank and file marched along eager for a share of the Indies’ riches and a chance to rise through the ranks.60

North American entradas were reasonably large armies, ranging in size from 400 to nearly 600 soldiers. Forward movement and a relentless search for wealth were their standing marching orders. All planned to live off the land as much as possible, taking by force or gaining through friendship most of what they needed along the way. Marching armies made demands on native populations far beyond those of a few passing ships. Armies of this size required full-time support from hundreds of native porters and servants for aid ranging from carting supplies to cooking meals. Some entradas brought a number of servants and slaves as part of the retinue. But all expedition planners expected that armies would take what human and material resources they needed from local Indian populations. If the crews of sixteenth-century galleons could be contented with the sexual services of a few captive Indian women, an army the size of Soto’s 600-man force, for

example, required hundreds. What is more, some *entradas* lasted several years, making them mobile case studies in cross-cultural sexual relations. By the time Soto’s men gave up marching and began rafting down the Mississippi, Spanish soldiers had fathered countless mixed-blood children whose Indian mothers, according to one witness, tearfully bid the army farewell. Whereas Elizabeth’s soldiers and seadogs could make do with one or two local Indians specially trained as translators and guides, Spanish armies marching hundreds of miles encountering numerous native societies required new interpreters for each new language and dozens of long- and short-term guides.

But scale alone did not make *entradas* unique. The armies’ survival depended on Indian cooperation, whether offered or taken, and soldiers often quick to use force to get what they needed. The violence that typified these expeditions was not so much the result of the members’ Spanish heritage (as contemporary writers from other European colonial powers often contended) but rather the military character of the *entradas* themselves. These trips were armed reconnaissances undertaken by sizable private armies living off the land and thinking of themselves as being in hostile territory—often a self-fulfilling prophecy. The military nature of *entradas* subjected captives to heavy-handed regimes far more authoritarian than anything in most Indian societies and well beyond the experience of other captive or voluntary guides.

These wide-ranging armies marched into unknown territory, often stumbling from village to village, river to river, and food supply to food supply. Conquistadors knew what they wanted—gold, slaves, women, food and so on; their problem was that they simply had no idea where to find it. The only people who could help the conquistadors find what they sought were local Indians who could direct the army to nearby sites or
experienced native travelers who knew the best paths between distant villages. Given the
Spaniards’ relative lack of geographic knowledge and their only occasional use of
navigational equipment (which of course were only useful for getting to known
destinations) the courses of these exploration armies’ marches depended almost entirely
on the skill, knowledge, and, most essentially, the good will of Indian guides and the
people they met along the way. 61 Yet these armies made few friends as they ravaged
their way through Indian towns and fields. Herein lies the central paradox of the great
entradas and the Indians who led them. Armies of Spaniards who were essentially lost
most of the time relied entirely on the skill and good will of local Indians acting as
guides. But at the same time, everything the armies did, from pillaging native villages to
forcefully capturing native guides and porters, served to alienate and assure the hostility
of the very Indians they needed most.

The entradas encountered their share of cooperative locals, but they also fell
victim to the schemes of their more geographically knowledgeable enemies—both within
and without the expedition. Part of the Spaniards’ problem lay in the way that they took
on new guides. When conquistadors needed native guidance, they simply took it. A
favorite tactic was to send a small mounted party off to scout the flanks or the front of the
main column’s line of march. Soldiers could then see firsthand what the country held and
also bring back small groups of local Indian informers. Most often guides procured in this
manner served for short periods, leading the army to a locally significant site and then
going their own ways either by agreement or stealth. The short-term guidance of the

Hernando de Soto Expedition: History, Historiography, and ‘Discovery’in the Southeast

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couple from Aguacaleyquen is an example of this kind of tense but brief impromptu relationship. In addition to raids like at Aguacaleyquen, chance meetings also provided opportunity for soldiers to take on captive guides. For example, when a trail-side meeting and hand sign discussion with about 200 Timucuan Indians resulted in an exchange of some seemingly unfriendly gestures in the spring of 1528, Narváez's men grabbed a half dozen of the natives and forced them to lead the soldiers to the Indians' nearby village.⁶²

This grab-guide-and-ditch strategy worked for the Spanish for two principal reasons. First it did not require the sustained good will of captive Indians who often had very little reason to want to aid the Spaniards. Indians captured in this sudden manner were often quick to tell the Spanish what they wanted to know as best they could and then get away as fast as possible. The strategy also succeeded because it did not presuppose that captives had good and useful knowledge of great distances. Presumably any local Indian could direct the army to the nearest village or river, since these would have been familiar places. But problems arose when it came to finding guides to take the army over large distances or for long periods. Here the entradas were at their most vulnerable and confused and their trips most defined by the skills, knowledge, and intentions of the Indians they happened to encounter and capture.

Getting information from the right Indian could mean the difference between success or failure, consequently the fates of these armies often depended on the quality and intentions of their coerced information. Not all Indians were expert travelers. Native societies whose way of life required members to move over large territories pursuing

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game or trade produced men and women who were all, by necessity, highly skilled and informed travelers. By adolescence every Montagnais, Cree, or Athabascan boy or girl had an expert’s knowledge of a wide swath of land. Migratory Indians were all skilled at how best to move over their landscapes, find ready food and build warm and dry shelter in a hurry, and survive the hardest of times. But the dazzling wealth of Aztec Tenochtitlan and Inca Cuzco was never far in the back of any North American conquistador’s mind. Migratory people, wherever they might live, did not possess the kind of wealth sought by every would-be Pizarro or aspiring Cortés. Only well-populated, settled states could yield the kind of quick haul that made men rich and drove other men to sign onto the next expedition. Consequently, North American conquistadors always tried to steer themselves towards large villages, believing fully in the El Dorado over the next river or behind the next mountain. This meant that the entradas most often marched into areas inhabited by Indians living in settled state societies. Unlike migratory bands, the members of these societies were not all skilled and experienced travelers. To be sure, these societies produced many Indians who traveled great distances to hunt, trade, or fight with distant foes. But there also were large numbers of villagers who rarely ventured more than a few dozen miles from their homes. The Spaniards’ undiscerning wide-net strategy of guide procurement ensured that more than a few inexperienced travelers would ineffectively lead the army. The entradas’ expansive territorial ambitions also meant that even experienced travelers would be forced to serve as guides well beyond the bounds of their specific geographical knowledge. In short, the material goals and needs of entradas, wealth, food, and tributary populations, created a situation whereby these armies were highly likely to be led by inexperienced travelers.
Hard-driving *entrada* leaders were frequently bedeviled by native guides whom they forced to lead beyond their sphere of geographic familiarity. On one occasion, Soto’s advance parties brought in “three or four” natives to serve as guides or to provide information, but the most informed of them “did not know farther on from the town.” The four coastal Timucuans who “lost their bearing somewhat” while leading Soto’s army northward in June 1539 also may well have been genuinely lost in the swamps dozens of miles from their homes. The Spanish chronicler of this small incident hinted at a larger tension in *entradas*’ internal Indian relations. In both of these cases these Indians may simply have been lying in order to cut short their time with the Spanish. Indeed, *entrada* leaders knew they were vulnerable to the hostile intentions of their Indian guides and were always conscious of a guide’s power to mislead. Likewise, captured Indians often knew that they had a distinct knowledge advantage over their well-armed captors and exploited the Spaniards’ geographic ignorance. Many captive guides lied and misled when the opportunity arose, and on several occasions conquistadors found themselves pointed away from the towns they sought, led into difficult swamps or thick woods, or brought to the edge of some raging impassable river.

For Indian guides engendering Spanish suspicion, whatever reason, the consequences were often quick and fatal. When Soto and his men arrived at the recently abandoned Florida town of Ocita, the soldiers vented their anger over finding no people or supplies by torching the empty homes. Angered at having been led down a fruitless path, Soto allowed his large war dogs to tear the hapless guide limb from limb. In the

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63 *De Soto Chronicles*, 1:226, Biedma.  
64 Ibid., 1:254, Ranjel.  
65 Ibid., 1:257, Ranjel.
eastern Texas flatlands, a Caddoan Indian from the town of Nondacoa told Luis Moscoso that the people of another nearby town spoke of seeing other Spaniards not far away. Eager to reach New Spain or make contact with their countrymen, the Spaniards followed their friendly Caddoan guide southward and two days off the beaten trail. But Moscoso, fearing that his army would “get lost in some unpeopled region,” suspected trickery and ordered the guide tortured. At some point during his ordeal the guide revealed that he had been asked by the chief of Nondacoa to lead the dangerous strangers way from Nondacoa and hopefully toward where they might ultimately die of hunger. This confession resulted in the guide’s death at the jaws of the always-hungry Spanish war dogs. Whether tortured, killed by dogs, or “hanged from a tree” (as was one guide), the costs of misleading *entradas* could be high. But so were the costs of allowing the Spanish to linger in one’s territory. It is hard to imagine the depth of the crisis native villages faced upon the arrival of a violent, ambitious, and disease-ridden army. Clearly many Indians were prepared to sacrifice themselves in order to help destroy the dangerous foe, and the Spaniards’ strategy of native reliance made their vulnerability clear for all to see.

By carefully manipulating an *entrada*’s core needs for food, information, porters assistance and the Spaniards’ ravenous hunger for mineral wealth, Indian guides could make misleading a very effective defense strategy. One such well-laid misguidance plan helped doom Narváez’s 400- man Florida expedition in 1529. Narváez, a man with considerable New World experience, landed at what is now Tampa Bay seeking his own

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66 Ibid., 1:146, Elvas.
67 Ibid., 1:244, Biedma.
68 Ibid., 1:145, Elvas.
golden fortune, which native informants led him to believe he would find in the land of Apalachee to the north along Florida’s Gulf Coast. But weeks of northward marching, dwindling supplies, difficult river crossings, and constant conflict with the coastal Timucuans had worn down the men and horses and deeply dampened their spirits. Finally, the army arrived at Apalachee’s principal town. The Spaniards found a fertile and game-rich settled land, but did not find the riches they most wanted. Exhausted, and no doubt somewhat confused and dismayed, the army spent twenty-five recuperative days gradually consuming the Indians’ food supplies and their hosts’ already limited good will. It was during that time that the villagers hatched a plan to rid themselves—and perhaps all of Florida—of their most unwanted guests.

Chiefs and headmen or women were always good sources of regional geographic, social, and economic information and the Spaniards rarely missed an opportunity to interrogate local leaders. After imprisoning and questioning the Apalachee chief and other native notables, Narváez learned that the land to the north was “very difficult to traverse” and was “sparsely inhabited.” A few scouting parties confirmed it. But to the south toward the sea, the captives claimed, lay the allied town of Aute, where fish, corn, beans, and squash all awaited them in abundance. The captives claimed the way was easy and would only take nine days. The captives baited the hook by portraying a shining path leading to warm seas and plenty of food while all else was barren and impassable, and Narváez’s men took the proffered bait setting off for Aute under native guidance. At first all went swimmingly. The native bowmen who had sniped at the edges of the column all

the way to Apalachee finally fell silent and the captive guides directed the army easily through the swamps. But on the second day the Indians sprung the trap. In the middle of a chest-deep, timber-clogged swamp, an army of well-hidden Apalachee archers—all armed with the dreaded armor-piercing long bow—loosed a torrent of arrows which virtually routed the bogged Spaniards. Unable to fire their harquebuses due to the high water, the soldiers made several slogging attempts to break out of their boggy trap. After some time, the Apalachees broke off their attack and let the Spaniards escape into the second phase of the plan. Narváez and his men pushed on toward the bounty of Aute. But what they found there was only a burned town and the charred remains of the food they so needed. It was the final nail in the *entrada*’s coffin. With nothing left to do, the men built rafts and set off to find safety in Mexico. The captive Apalachee guides succeeded in pulling off a masterful plan and after escaping, they returned to their homes and families; only four of Narváez’s men would be so lucky.70

The captive guides Hudson took on board his *Half Moon* and the Floridians Laudonnière hoped to lull into friendship with gifts and kind words knew the true limits of their captors’ authority. They waited their moment and then simply left. But captive guides at the head of Spanish armies faced a more perilous situation that afforded no simple solution. Their plight’s mix of risk and power is a testament not only to Indian agency on these trips, but to the chaotic and dependent nature of this type of exploration. As if in recognition of how vital these guides actually were, the chroniclers of *entradas* often devoted considerable effort to describing guides’ actions. This was especially true

when guides were at the center of controversies that affected an expedition’s course or outcome. A detailed examination of the careers of a few of the best documented captive guides illustrates the dangers, dilemmas, and choices facing those marching with Spain’s great armies of North American exploration. It also provides a unique window into how well some captive guides could manipulate their captors and the degree to which these expeditions’ paths and outcomes sometimes stemmed not from the plans and ambitions of the well known men nominally in charge, but rather from the often only dimly viewed goals of native guides.

Three of these men, Perico, who led Soto’s army into South Carolina’s Mississippian-style kingdom of Cofitachiqui, and Turco and Isopete, who went with Francisco Vázquez de Coronado onto the great plains of Quivira in Kansas, played central, even pivotal roles in the histories of their entradas. All three were captives and all three hailed originally from lands distant from their place of capture. This means that unlike some captives, these men were already experienced native travelers well before the Spaniards sought to turn their native knowledge to Castilian advantage. But each of these guides saw different opportunities in their plights and acted accordingly. Their uniquely well-documented experiences show that even in the darkest of captivity clouds coerced guides worked hard to find a silver lining, however tarnished.

Language skills sit at the center of the story of one of Soto’s many native guides—a young man whom the Spanish called “Perico” a diminutive of Pedro which tellingly means “Parrot.” One of the central actors in Perico’s short story was Juan Ortiz, a young hidalgo left behind by a search party looking for clues to the fate of the Narváez

Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704 (Athens:
expedition. Ortiz had spent the years between his early 1529 abandonment and his 1539 reunion living with the Timucuans, learning their languages, and doing some limited travel—by his own claim he had not been more than thirty miles from where he met his former countrymen. The tattooed and nativized Ortiz could not offer much information about surrounding lands and their wealth potential, but he became an irreplaceable linguistic link between the Spaniards and local peoples. Running into Ortiz early in the trip was one of the best bits of luck to befall Soto and his men. Until his death in Arkansas nearly two years later, Ortiz stood at the end of a chain of numerous translators, each of whom would take a message from one language into another until it came to Ortiz to turn it into his rusty Castilian.71

Without native guides and informers, Ortiz was of little use once beyond his thirty-mile limit. Spanish horsemen regularly brought in new captives and kept Ortiz busy translating details about where the army found itself. During one foray away from the main column, Soto’s treasurer Juan Gaytán brought in a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old youth who claimed to be from a distant interior region called Yupaha which lay “in the direction of the sunrise.”72 This lad, whom the soldiers quickly nicknamed Perico, told them of a town of “wonderful size” ruled by a queen who received tribute in cloth,

University of Georgia Press, 1994), 50-73.
71 Duncan, Hernando De Soto, 262; James Axtell, The Indians’ New South: Cultural Change in the Colonial Southeast (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 16-17.
72 De Soto Chronicles, 1:74, Elvas. Garcilaso de la Vega claimed that the youth was in fact captured at Apalachee, but most scholars tend to favor the details offered by first-hand observers like the Gentleman from Elvas over the later writings of Garcilaso de la Vega. See Patricia Galloway, “The Incestuous Soto Narratives,” in Galloway, The Hernando de Soto Expedition, 11-44; David Henige, “The Context, Content, and Credibility of La Florida del Ynca,” The Americas, 43 (1986):10-11. Garcilaso de la Vega claims that Perico was one of over 300 captives taken at Naputica.
precious stones, and metals. The Spaniards heard Perico’s words as confirming their wildest dreams—there was gold in the hills to the northeast! With the added assurance that Perico recognized the gold and silver the Spaniards showed him and was able to satisfactorily describe how it was mined and smelted, Soto’s army set off on what they reckoned to be a journey of at least 180 miles.\textsuperscript{73} Perico’s story, probably told through Ortiz, ensured the boy’s captivity and so the army took him with them to act as guide.

The Peruvian Garcilaso de la Vega, a non-participant and the most embellishment-prone of the four Soto chroniclers, claimed that Perico had been the servant of traders from the interior and that his story was based on his travels with them. In Garcilaso’s retelling, a friendly Indian in Spanish service recognized Perico and pointed him out to the soldiers as someone who knew the interior. When asked about his connection to the merchants, Perico replied that “he knew about some of the provinces that he had visited with his masters, the merchants, and he would venture to guide the Spanish twelve or thirteen days’ journey.”\textsuperscript{74} The friendly assistance of Garcilaso’s Perico is suspect as are the boy’s alleged claims that his merchant masters regularly traded in “yellow” and “white” metals like the silver and gold the Spanish showed him. The Southeast has few natural sources of silver and gold, as the Spaniards ultimately realized. Ironically, what precious metals the Spaniards did see in native hand were most often reworked blocks and ingots that had washed ashore from the wrecks of Spanish treasure ships carrying the wealth of the Indies along the South’s coast.\textsuperscript{75} It is possible that Perico desired to tell the Spaniards only that his homeland was rich in useful metals such as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[^{73}] De Soto Chronicles, 1:74, Elvas.
\item[^{74}] Ibid., 2:249, de la Vega.
\item[^{75}] Axtell, Indians’ New South, 12-13.
\end{footnotes}
copper. The differences between gold and copper were all too clear to the Spaniards, but Perico, having jewelry waved in his face, may have failed to make European metallurgical distinctions that had little to do with the way Indians valued their possessions. Nevertheless, Perico’s language skills, his partial and imperfect geographical knowledge, and the rapidity with which he came to entrada leaders’ attention all suggest that the youth did indeed hail from a distant land. Whether he was the servant of merchants remains unclear.

While probably not native to Apalachee, Perico was also probably not the eager friend that Garcilaso suggests. More likely he responded to his capture the same way the man and woman from Aguacaleyquen did: he did as he was ordered. Any Indian seeing Soto’s army of mounted soldiers, well-armed infantrymen, voracious war dogs, herds of unfamiliar livestock, and hundreds of chained native porters and followers would have known that this was indeed a force to be reckoned with. Furthermore, tales of the army’s destructive capacities quickly made it into the hinterland well in advance of the oncoming hoard’s own stench and racket. Perhaps Indians hoping to protect themselves and their kin fingered Perico the non-local as having useful knowledge. Perhaps he saw an opportunity to return home by aiding the strangers’ progress. Although captured in northern Florida Perico had some experience of other lands and spoke not only Timucuan but Muskogean languages as well. This made the multilingual youth second only to Ortiz in translation importance as the entrada moved between language groups. This

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central role as translator may have appealed to Perico because it mirrored the role of the Apalachee chiefs’ official translators or *atequi*, who held powerful positions in native hierarchies. Facility with language was a road to social prestige in southeastern Indian societies, and Perico’s skills also enabled him to gain a seemingly high position in Soto’s army. Whether he offered himself as a guide or others volunteered him, once clapped in irons, put at the head of the column, and made the focus of all eyes (and potentially of all weapons), his quick escape was impossible. The soundest policy would have been to guide the army to the best of his ability while hoping for something better down the road.

That is just what Perico did for the next several days as the army marched northeast from the Florida panhandle into South Carolina. But in the village of Patofa things took a turn for the worse. There Perico had a fit of spasms in which he “began to foam at the mouth and to throw himself at the ground.” Rodrigo Rangel believed that the youth “made himself out to be possessed” because he “did not know anymore of the land.” In Rangel’s view, Perico “knew how to do it so well that the Christians thought that it was the truth.” So convinced of demonic activity was the aptly named missionary Fray Juan el Evanjelico that he immediately began to pray the evangel over the boy’s writhing body. Some Spaniards thought themselves the victims of a hoax, others saw the Devil at work, but something else may have been going on in the fit the Spanish soldiers (if not the clergy) were so quick to denounce as a fraud. Perico’s knowledge of the path ahead may indeed have been failing him. Recognizing the dangers implicit in his failure at this important juncture, he perhaps turned to spiritual assistance through a ritual

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78 *De Soto Chronicles*, 1:80, Elvas.
trance. The “foam[ing] at the mouth” is consistent with southeastern Indian practices like the drinking and vomiting of cacina, the so-called “black drink.” The flailing about, although not a part of documented black drink ceremonies, was a part of many other Indian transcendent rituals. Whether it was a trance, fit, or possession, Perico emerged from his stupor with the news that Yupaha was now only “four day’s thence toward the rising sun.”

The people of Patofa did not agree with Perico’s trance-induced geography and told the Spaniards that they knew of no such place in that direction and at that distance. But the town’s chief did offer another plan. Soto and his men often found themselves the beneficiaries of native hostilities. Patofa the local chief saw in Soto the opportunity to deal a devastating blow to his enemies. He offered the Spaniards guides, supplies, and hundreds of porters if they wanted to march against Coosa to the northwest. Soto preferred to stick to the riches he believed Perico had promised them at Yupaha, and so the army planned to continue on with the youth. Patofa’s chief wisely offered his assistance anyway, no doubt seeing the benefit of getting Soto’s army out of his lands in one direction or another. But now Perico and his story were on the line. The local Indians had not heard of the land he claimed was their neighbor, and in the face of such a damning contradiction the entrada leaders began to question their guide’s reliability—they had been deceived before and were quick to turn suspicious. Perico had to have seen enough of his fellow travelers to know that his future depended on the accuracy of the geography that came in the trance.

79 Ibid., 1:273, Rangel; 1:80, Elvas.
80 Ibid., 1:80, Elvas.
Four days became nine. The path “gradually grew narrower until it was all lost.”

Provisions ran low. The increasingly anxious army crossed one river, then a second, and at the third Soto lost his patience with his young guide. With the men and horses tired, hungry, and soaked, no trail before them, and little idea where they were or where they were headed, Soto finally decided Perico’s fate. He was to be thrown to the dogs “because he had deceived them.” Only the intervention of Juan Ortiz, who knew all too well how vital Perico’s language skills were, saved him from being torn apart by the governor’s mastiffs. Lost and angry, Soto sent the Patofa porters back to the town so as not to have to feed them any longer. On April 26th 1540 the army set off in a new direction for a town called Aymay, guided there by “an Indian woman and a boy” whom Juan de Añasco captured at a town a few leagues away. Perico was no longer useful as a guide and so he was replaced, but he was still a needed part of the expedition. From then on Perico continued to help in the ever growing translation chain as the entrada moved into new territories with new languages. At some point later he joined those Indians who chose to become Christians like their captors. What experience or revelation brought him to that choice is unknown, but his baptism and his officially taking the Christian name “Pedro” not only granted him access to the kingdom of heaven, it allowed him to travel free of his heavy iron chains.

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81 Ibid.
82 Hudson, Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun, 167-68. Hudson restates the general consensus that the three rivers were the Savannah, Saluda, and the Broad. This would mean that the village of Amay sat at the confluence of the Congaree, Wateree, and Santee rivers in South Carolina.
83 De Soto Chronicles, 1:80, Elvas.
84 Ibid., 1:81, Elvas.
Perico’s story of a wealthy land toward the rising sun, and the gilded fantasy that the Spaniards read into it, drove the entire entrada for the better part of two months and over hundreds of miles. Forced into the job and tied to what the Spaniards believed he had promised them, Perico’s fate hung on the accuracy of his information and its translation. Unlike Narváez’s guides, Perico did not seem to have intentionally misled Soto’s army; he did effectively lead them over quite some distance, and when he was finally beyond his knowledge, he reportedly admitted that he “did not know where he was.” Had he acted as a short-term guide, taking the entrada from one village to the next or getting it through some imposing mountain range or swamp, he would have been one of the dozens or more anonymous Indians who did their “job” and then left the army. Instead, his cryptic story of distant wealth tied him to the entrada beyond the point where he really could be an effective guide and thus nearly cost him his life. But at the same time his language skills became a means of survival and perhaps even status for this young man.

Perico’s tongue saved him from the dogs and he continued with the Spanish, ultimately taking on their faith and supposedly even their clothing. But hollow stories of distant wealthy cities and the high hopes they engendered, did ultimately claim the life of one Indian guide traveling with Francisco Vázquez de Coronado in Kansas. The man, known to history as “the Turk” or “Turco,” did not have the language skills that shaped Perico’s captivity and in part this lack of ability to communicate with the Spanish was his undoing. In 1540 Coronado led an army of mostly inexperienced conquistadors and scores of Mexican Indian porters into the pueblo lands of what is now New Mexico in

85 Ibid., 1:80, Elvas.
search of riches. The Spanish already knew that there were large, well-populated
villages in the hinterlands north of New Spain. For their part the local Indians already
knew the Spanish from the latter's first tentative explorations and numerous slave raids.
Unlike the great eastern entradas that relied on ships to get them in and out of their
exploration zone, Coronado’s venture was an overland affair. Marching north from
Spanish territory allowed him to take along large numbers of African slaves and Mexican
Indians, the latter of whom brought with them some geographic knowledge and language
skills. The expedition was initially aided by the company of a Franciscan named Fray
Marcos de Niza, who in 1538 had visited the area and returned with tantalizing stories of
rich golden cities. But despite this initial edge, Coronado relied on the same pattern that
Narváez and Soto had employed. The plan was again to capture native informers or
receive people granted by local chiefs. These people would serve as guides and
informants and get the army from place to place, hopefully adding untold riches into the
bargain.

What happened instead was a prolonged campaign of violence, theft, rape, and
intimidation that saw the destruction of as many as thirteen Indian villages. Cibola was
no golden hoard. It was instead a dry land of plateaus and rocky outcroppings where
survival depended on carefully shepherding resources. Side trips led by Coronado’s
lieutenants failed to find any evidence of Cibola’s seven golden cities. The air of anger
and disappointment became so heavy that Coronado and his men even turned on Fray

86 Weber, Spanish Frontier in North America, 48.
87 Ibid.
Marcos and sent him home, claiming that “he has not told the truth in a single thing that he said, but everything is the opposite of what he related.”

Early in the venture Coronado’s advance party met an embassy from the distant Cibola pueblo of Cicuye bearing gifts of “dressed skins, shields, and headpieces.” The party’s leader, a “robust” young chief whom the soldiers called Bigotes for his “long mustaches,” told them that they had come to “serve” the Spaniards and “offer themselves as friends.” At first relations were cordial between the Cibolans and the kwakung or “metal men.” The Indians escorted their visitors through Cibola and onto the plains, ostensibly to view the buffalo herds about which the Spaniards expressed some curiosity. While visiting the buffalo plains, one of the guides told fabulous tales of great wealth in the lands of Quivira and the more distant Harahay (his own homeland) to the east. Just as Soto’s men did with Perico’s story, Coronado’s gold seekers jumped on the details that most interested them and used a perfunctory metal identification quiz as proof of the story’s veracity. The soldiers called this man Turco because his appearance—perhaps a locally uncharacteristic scalp lock or turban—reminded them of a Turk’s. Whatever the reason behind the choice, given Spain’s history of war against Islam the name reveals at least a hint of Spanish mistrust of the man if not his story. Nevertheless, Turco’s story stirred the advance party’s gold sense so much that they “did not care to look at cattle”

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88 George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds., Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 170. Hereafter cited as Coronado.
89 Ibid., 217.
91 Coronado, 219; Wedel, “The Indian They Called Turco,” 157; Brandon, Quivira, 33.
and just as soon as they saw a few buffalo they quickly “turned back to report the rich news” to Coronado.92

Filtered through some combination of interpreters and sign language, Turco’s story must have been sketchy at best and its intended meaning long lost.93 In conquistador Pedro de Castañeda’s memory, Turco claimed to come from a distant land of plains where there ran a large river “two leagues wide” in which one could find “fish as large as horses.” Chiefs in this land majestically rode at the stern of large gold-adorned canoes rowed by “more than twenty oarsmen on each side.” When not gliding on the water these chiefs rested under large shade trees, lulled to sleep by the tinkling of countless “golden jingle bells” and dining from of “pitchers, dishes, and bowls” all made of gold. Commoners had to make due with a “common table service” which was “generally of wrought silver.”94 The story was clearly a mix of Indian information and Spanish fantasy, but in some of the details Turco seems to have been describing a Mississippian high chiefdom.95 The wide river, the plains, the large canoe, and the aura of nobility all accord with what we know of the Indian state societies that thrived in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Midwest. But other details defy credibility, especially considering that Coronado suffered from the same translation problems that plagued Soto. Coronado had translators with him and Turco spoke some Nahuatl, the Aztec tongue that served as a lingua franca throughout Northern Mexico.96 In some cases communication took place via hand signs so subtle and evocative that an impressed

92 Coronado, 219.
93 Ibid., 346. Lopez de Cardenas claimed on the Buffalo trip and on to Quivira the Spaniards abandoned their “three or four interpreters” in favor of hand signals.
94 Coronado, 221.
95 Brandon, Quivira, 33.
Casteñeda claimed that “it seemed as if they spoke.” But no hand signs could be trusted to have described things as un-Indian as “golden jingle bells” or silver dinner sets. Also, Turco called gold “acoчис,” a word that to some Indian linguists sounds very much like an Hispanicized version of the Wichita word ha:kwicис meaning “yellow metal, usually copper.” Turco’s different appearance, his superficially accurate knowledge of distant lands, and his use of a possibly Wichita word for copper all suggest that he did indeed come from a distant place. But they also suggest that, as with Perico’s story, the Spaniards employed an alchemy of wishful greed that turned native copper into golden bangles and silver baubles. And as with Perico, the storyteller’s fate hung on the accuracy of what the Spanish understood him to have claimed. In this case the storyteller would not survive his captor’s disillusionment.

After a blood-soaked winter of war in 1540-1541 that devastated the heart of Cibola, Coronado’s full army set off for the northeast with visions of untold wealth in their heads and Indian corn in their saddlebags. They took along captives from the winter’s fighting and brought Turco as a guide to the northeastern riches. But if the army was willing to believe what they thought Turco had told them about Quivira’s wealth,

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96 Coronado, 302; Wedel, “The Indian They Called Turco,” 159.  
97 Coronado, 235. Wedel claims that much of Turco’s information came through hand signs.  
98 Ibid., 221; Wedel, “The Indian They Called Turco,” 155.  
99 Tzvetan Todorov takes on the question of mutual incomprehensibility and its ramifications in the context of Columbus’s trips to the West Indies. See The Conquest of America, 15-33.  
there were Indians in the group who were not. Early on, Xabe, a Quiviran captive boy given the army by Bigotes, opened the first cracks in the Quivira wealth fantasy. He told the Spanish that “there was silver and gold” in Quivira, “but not in the quantities” Turco had suggested. Soon afterward another source of doubt and tension arose. Turco set a course that took the army more towards the south than expected and another Quivira native named Isopete came forward and protested that Turco was leading the army in the wrong direction. At first the Spaniards dismissed Isopete’s nay-saying, but his credibility grew as the army cut deeper and deeper into their supplies and Turco’s promises of only a few days’ further march proved untrue. What is more, as they marched farther onto the Great Plains local Querecho buffalo hunters corroborated Isopete’s doubts. As the army progressed, the two guides Turco and Isopete became inveterate enemies, with Isopete using hand signals to indicate that he would “rather have his head cut off” than follow Turco’s course and Turco in turn calling Isopete “a scoundrel” and assuring the Spanish that his rival “did not know what he was talking about.” In the face of mounting evidence, Coronado lost faith in Turco and asked Isopete to lead the army on a new course to Quivira. Isopete gladly consented but warned them that Turco had lied about both Quivira’s wealth and its location. Turco’s star fell and he found himself confined to the rear of the column and in chains, with a hostile

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101 Coronado, 234. Before leaving Cicuye a soldier named Cervantes claimed to have seen Turco engaging in devil worship by talking to a small cup of water. Cervantes found that Turco also knew about the death of some soldiers without apparently having spoken to anyone else. As a result some in the army came to distrust Turco before the march to Quivira even began.
102 Coronado, 235.
103 Ibid., 301.
104 Ibid., 301, 242.
105 Ibid., 302.
Isopete wanting him abandoned on the plains. Once in Quivira the bubble finally burst. "No gold nor silver nor information of any" as one disappointed soldier wrote.\textsuperscript{106} Even the hope for more distant wealthy lands were dashed by Quivirans reporting that "there was nothing beyond Quivira" except Harahey, which they said was pretty much the same kind of place.\textsuperscript{107} The news seemed confirmed when the only valuable metals the army saw was a chief's simple copper plate medallion.

With Isopete vindicated and Turco's story proven untrue, the Spaniards turned on the journey's originator and demanded to know why he had misled them. In response Turco claimed that the whole venture was a scheme to lead the metal men onto the plains where "through lack of provisions" they would gradually starve or become so weak as to be easy prey for native warriors.\textsuperscript{108} In one chronicler's version he was acting on behalf of Bigotes and the people of Cibola. In other versions he called upon local Indians to rise up and kill the intruders once the plan had failed. Whatever the case, the price of Turco's last story was his life. To the reported great pleasure of Isopete, a Spanish soldier garroted their former guide.\textsuperscript{109} Soon the army turned back for Cibola, led by six new Quiviran guides. For his cooperation Isopete was allowed to remain in Quivira with his own people.\textsuperscript{110}

Turco and Isopete's tense relationship was at the core of the Quivira trip, and even in the necessarily stark outlines the limited documentation permits, the Turco-

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 304.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 242, 304, 336. During later trials, the Spaniards could not agree on who had killed Turco or by what means. Most of the witnesses claimed that he had been garrotted. This was a fairly common form of criminal execution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
Isopete conflict has much to say about the different ways that coerced guides responded to their plights. Superficially, the two had much in common. Both men were probably captives of the Pueblo people living in Cibola. Isopete was certainly from Quivira, while Turco may have been from there or from one of the more distant but similar societies.111 Both men knew of other places through firsthand experience and demonstrated their geographic knowledge even though their method of communication with the Spanish was fraught with opportunities for errors. Turco’s cryptic description of what seems to be a Mississippian chiefdom suggests that he had at least heard of such places even if he had not seen them firsthand. Both men had ample reason to hate and fear the Spaniards. During the 1540-41 winter war, Coronado specifically demanded that the two non-Cibolans witness the burning of Indian prisoners so that “they might spread the report in their countries of the justice that was meted out to those who rebelled.”112 Both men knew firsthand how murderous Coronado’s army could be. Both men may have had their own reasons to want to go with the Spanish, but at the same time the heavy-handed militarism that Coronado brought to Cibola meant that guides like Turco and Isopete were far from freely consenting partners. Both men had little choice but to do as they were told, even though they may have hoped to turn it to their respective advantages. But despite these similarities, the two men came to different conclusions about their plight and arrived at different ways to make the best of it. Their different strategies and their different logical outcomes naturally brought the two men into conflict. For although the

110 Ibid., 23, 305.
111 Ibid., 219. Castañeda calls Turco a “slave.”
112 Ibid., 334-35.
Spanish were often unable to understand what their guides were thinking and doing, Turco and Isopete seem to have understood each other all too well.

Turco was one of the many Indian guides who intentionally deceived his European companions. He had hoped to lead the army into the wilds where they would become weak and easy targets for Indian warriors. But unlike the Timucuan guides who led Narváez into a swamp trap, Turco had no co-conspirators, either travelling with the army or lying in wait for it. Castañeda claimed that Turco confessed that the plan to misguide the Spanish originated with the Cibolans and that they had asked Turco to lead the Spaniards "astray on the plains." Other chroniclers claimed that Turco’s last act was to call upon the local Plains Indians to rise up and kill the metal men. Others also claimed that Turco told the Indians of various villages along the way not to supply the Spaniards with food and to "keep an eye on certain of the best horses" because once these died the soldiers would be at their most vulnerable. Whether of his own initiative or at the behest of the Cibolans, Turco does seem to have set off for Quivira planning to see the army perish. He even made sure that they were under-supplied by telling them that the journey was short and they would want to have empty saddlebags to hold all the gold they would find. But despite this careful planning, it is unlikely that he began his association with the Spaniards in the same state of mind.

Turco first told of the northeastern riches during the relatively amicable buffalo trip. No doubt Bigotes and other Cibolan leaders knew enough of the Spaniards to want them out of their homeland as expeditiously as possible. The eager willingness with which the Indians escorted Alvarado and his men to see the herds bespeaks a desire to be

113 Ibid., 241.
cordial and gracious to their guests and quickly help them on to their next destination. But an audacious plan like Turco’s seems premature at that early stage of his Spanish association. Rather, the desire to kill Coronado and his men probably sprang from the winter war’s ashes. Turco’s gold story therefore probably began not as a ruse to trick the Spanish; it may have instead been more innocent, however misunderstood and mangled in translation. Turco may have desired to share his distance knowledge with others who were clearly experienced travelers. He also may have harbored a desire to return home and saw in the *entreda* a chance to leave Cibola safely in prestigious company. But as relations soured, Turco’s story, and the obvious interest it inspired in the Spaniards, became a way for the Pueblos to end a major crisis. No one will ever know for sure what Turco’s first thoughts or plans were, but it is clear that by the time the army set off for Quivira, he planned to be the agent of their destruction.

Isopete, on the other hand, saw in Coronado’s army a way to return home and consequently was not prepared to sacrifice that opportunity in order to destroy the Spanish. He may have been a more recent captive than was Turco and as such may have still felt animosity towards his native captors. If this were true, then the violence that turned Turco’s heart may have seemed like sweet revenge to Isopete. Leading these powerful men into his homeland would have garnered for Isopete the social prestige that generally came from such high-profile actions. This desire drove many Indians during the early colonial era to step to the front of European columns and show them the way. But had he allowed the army to fall into Turco’s trap Isopete himself would have squandered the opportunity fate had put in his path.

114 Ibid., 336.
If language skills were the lifeline that saved Perico from a toothsome fate, it was in part a language barrier that caused the cord to tighten around Turco’s neck. His plan rested on two pillars, the first being that the army had to be in dry, resource-poor territory. The second was that communication between locals and Spaniards had to be kept to a minimum. The awkward melange of hand signs and a few words was a poor vehicle for communication and the addition of Isopete and his own contrary agenda only made conversations more confused while feeding Spanish doubt. Once the army turned north and headed toward Quivira they moved in the traditional \textit{entrada} march pattern, toward populated areas. They also doomed Turco’s plan by ensuring that more voices—and hand signs—would enter the mix and undermine Turco’s position as sole guide. Turco’s plan to control communication and mislead Coronado’s army smacked headlong into the Quivirans’ desired to reap rewards of goods and social prestige from the Spaniards and Isopete’s plan to use the army to get home. Unable to control what the Spaniards knew, Turco came out the worse from this collision of agendas.

With such different visions of the opportunities and dangers implicit in Coronado’s \textit{entrada}, it is small wonder that Turco and Isopete, though in many respects similar, became inveterate enemies. Their conflict mirrors what may have taken place away from English ears between Manteo and Wanchese as those two captives began to harbor different feelings toward their captors. Captive guides had to create a delicate balance between their captors’ and their own ambitions and carefully use their superior geographic knowledge. They did not choose the timing or situation that led them to be guides, but those like Manteo, Wanchese, Perico, Turco, and Isopete who had some of the needed skills could attempt to derive some benefit from an otherwise rotten situation.
But nothing dictated that captives would necessarily arrive at the *same* conclusions about how best to benefit from their grim plight. Some chose cooperation and others chose opposition, but in each case the captives did the best they could to loosen their chains.
By 1680 New York City was a pretty cosmopolitan place. Although politically English, the port city and its environs still bore the distinct stamp of a multinational colonial heritage. From Dutch burghers' brick row houses to English and Walloon villages, the New York area was a place where one could expect to run into American-born Dutch farmers, Welsh immigrant craftsmen, English Calvinist fishermen and French-speaking black slaves. Living in and around this mixed world were the descendants of the region's original Algonquian inhabitants. Most lived in small family-centered bands, sometimes occupying lands right in the shadows of European settlers' homes. These Indians lived lives that were socially and economically tied to those of their immigrant neighbors. Many spoke Dutch, French, or English in addition to their native tongues and knew the habits of Europeans well from long observation and experience.

The aged sagamore and healer whom the Dutch called Hans was one such man. Although he lived with his family on the New Jersey side of New York Harbor, he had friends and kinfolk all around the area and his duties regularly took him far from home to settle his people's disputes and cure their ills. On the morning of March 4, 1680, Hans was at home resting after returning from a visit to the small Indian town of Ackquekenonk near present-day Paterson. His recuperation was interrupted by the
unexpected arrival of a small group of Dutch travelers who had rowed across the bay in the company of Hans’s sometime friend Gerrit Evertssen van Duyn. It was van Duyn who led the party to Hans’s home in order to request his assistance in the travelers’ planned visit to Ackquekenonk. Hans after all spoke Dutch “tolerably well,” knew his way to all the local Indian settlements, and was a man the locals knew and trusted. But Hans was less than thrilled at the prospect of repeating the trip he had just taken. In refusing to accompany the travelers, Hans candidly voiced his opinion of the Dutchmen and their request in words of discontent that still sting even centuries later.

“Would you Christians do as much for us Indians? If you had just been there and had come back tired and weary, and some Indians should come and ask you in the midst of your children, in your own houses, while busied with your occupation, would you be ready immediately to go back with them?”

Hans’s Dutch may have been only ‘tolerable” but he certainly knew how to make himself understood. After thinking over Hans’s soul-searching implication-rich question for a brief second, the Dutchmen somewhat disingenuously answered that indeed they would be more than happy to drop what they were doing and set off with a hypothetical Indian if the situation were reversed. They would be willing, that is, if the price was right. The aged Hans, who had lived much of life alongside the bustling center of Dutch and now English habitation in New York, had seen too much of his neighbors to believe these wide-eyed travelers’ answer. “I do not think so,” he told them, “I know well what you
would do.” But in the end Hans went with the Dutchmen for the price of a blanket, which he picked up in New York later on.115

Why did Hans go? There are many possible explanations. He may simply have wanted a new blanket and was willing to retrace his steps to Ackquekenonk in order to get it. He may have had his own unstated reasons for making the trip and used his speech as a bargaining ploy. Perhaps he went along out of friendship for van Duyn. Whatever his hidden motivations, countless Indians like Hans chose to accompany European travelers because in one way or another it suited their own interests.

As the sixteenth century’s wave of exploration yielded to the growth of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlement, the European strategy of capturing guides waned. But colonists’ need for Indian travel assistance did not decline as the European pale of settlement widened. In fact, with more travelers going in more directions, more Indians and Europeans traveled together than ever before. Similarly, as Europeans became increasingly familiar with the continent, there was no commensurate decline in the need for Indian companions even in areas of comparative familiarity. The Dutch travelers who sought out Hans’s assistance for a trip of less than thirty miles and an English traveler who in 1743 hired a guide for a trip of only four or five miles demonstrate that many seemingly easy trips were simply inconceivable without native help.116

Instead of a decline in the need for Indians’ travel assistance, different types of European travelers, missionaries, traders, naturalists, and explorers opened up new types of travel relationships and made new demands on Indian companions. Likewise, as European settlements and their long economic, religious, and social tendrils became more of a fact in native lives, the relatively softer coercions of economics, political alliances, and personal obligation replaced the sixteenth-century’s explorers’ heavy hand. Indians found a number of rewards in accompanying European travelers. Indians’ rewards for travel could take many forms from material benefits acquired through trades or gifts, to less tangible gains like social prestige or a maintenance of traditional privileges. Rewards also took different forms depending on the social status of individual Indian guides, porters, and hunters. Headmen found that the offer of capable and willing guides was a fine way to secure friendship and trade advantages from Europeans. Common folk found that they could parlay their knowledge and skills into useful and desirable trade goods, and even create avenues to social prestige. Traditional motives such as alliance-building gift exchanges and chiefs’ control of territorial access, remained vigorous throughout the colonial era, especially where Indians lived lives removed from daily contact with Europeans.

For Indians living close to European colonial towns, forts, and trade centers, travel assistance became a low-cost way to gain access to the imported material goods whose use and distribution was increasingly becoming vital for survival and domestic standing. As more and more European travelers sought Indian assistance, a rough economics of companionship came into being that could include all Indians, not just community leaders. Indians bartered, volunteered, or hired out their services in a variety
of ways to gain access to trade goods, to enhance their prestige at home, and sometimes for the enjoyment of travel or out of friendship or respect for specific European travelers. These Indians generally accompanied Europeans because it usually proved to be a good deal for the Indians themselves. Throughout the colonial era, Indian guides, hunters, and porters proved to be skillful negotiators and showed endless creativity and boldness in turning situations to their advantage and looking out for their own social and economic interests while on the trail with Europeans.

One of the first things the English colonists at Jamestown did after building a rough protective enclosure was to explore tidewater Virginia’s waterways with Indian assistance. During one northern foray they met the Potomac Indians and became quite interested in the small evidence of gold mixed into the sand of the river now bearing the tribe’s name. The Potomac chief, Matchqueon, offered to show the interested Englishmen a river where the Indians mined a mineral-laced dirt which they used to “to paint there bodyes, faces, or Idols.” In order to get to the site of the mine Matchqueon furnished Smith and company with several able guides.117

When fur trader and explorer Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye headed onto the Canadian Shield in 1734 in search of new trade routes and contacts, he did so with native aid. La Vérendrye communicated with an unnamed Cree chief living on Lake Winnipeg through a small group of emissaries. After a friendly exchange of goods which included awls, cloaks, powder and shot, and even an Indian “slave,” the Frenchman got down to his principal need from the headman at Winnipeg—guides. The go-betweens

returned home and within a few days a pair of guides arrived at the French camp “sent by the chief” and “laden with dry moose meat.”\textsuperscript{118}

These two small incidents were far apart in time and space, but in both cases an Indian leader used his authority to send some of his people off to travel with Europeans. Native leaders had several motivations for offering their assistance to Europeans when the latter wandered into their lands. Soto, Coronado, and other entrada leaders often received guides given them by local chiefs. In some cases, these guides were part of larger plans to trick and whip Spanish armies while they were vulnerable and disoriented. At other times Indian leaders simply hoped to get these strangers out of their territory as quickly as possible. A generous offer of assistance was also a form of diplomatic outreach and a hopeful overture for a new alliance between travelers and locals. By sending guides to la Vérendrye, the Cree chief strengthened the tie between his people and the French. Colonial alliances were built on these sorts of kind acts; to not act in a friendly and generous manner potentially threatened to undermine existing bonds or to make future ones harder to secure. An Assiniboin chief clearly had this in mind when he told French traders headed for the Mandan country: “we thank you my father, for having taken the trouble to come to us. We are all going to accompany you to the Mandan, and conduct you back to your fort.”\textsuperscript{119} The Assiniboin chief apparently had an eye on protecting his people’s trade interest as well.

Indian leaders were often as jealous of their authority as any European prince, and strangers wandering through a people’s land constituted a number of threats. Offering

\textsuperscript{118} Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and his Sons (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1927) 173.

\textsuperscript{119} Journals of Vérendrye, 315.
selected guides was a way to maintain control over the route and implications of wandering visitors. When Matchqueon sent his men to take Smith and company to the dirt mines, he may have hoped his gesture would initiate a friendship with the strangers and thereby improve his people's lot, increase his own standing, or even gain military or trade advantages over his neighbors. Smith, like so many exploration-minded Europeans, saw native assistance of this type as the "kindly" actions of a "kinde king and his kinde people." In the invaders' logic, leaders like Matchqueon were motivated to offer assistance by a desire to please these manifestly superior Christian newcomers and thus "did their best to content" the strangers. But Matchqueon's offer also may have carried a subtle message which the headstrong English failed to see. By offering guides, Matchqueon reminded the English visitors that this was his land and that he alone controlled access to it. He sanctioned English travel in his territory, but only on his own conditions and overseen by himself or men of his choosing. While Matchqueon may have been impressed with Smith and his gun-toting, armor-bearing retinue, he may also have wished to lay down the geographic law and ensure that these freebooters understood who was the boss. Other chiefs who warned travelers of "bad and impassable ways," impenetrable woods, deep and wild rivers, hostile locals who would break open heads "without any cause," and even "horrible monsters," or heat so intense that it would "inevitably cause...death" may have employed such stories to keep strangers from seeing too much of their lands. Europeans usually suspected that these chiefs tried to scare travelers because they did not want the benefits of trade and alliances to slip

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120 Complete Works of John Smith, 2:167.
through their fingers and go to their enemies. Sometimes they thought that these headmen were simply being spiteful or perfidious and used the retelling in print of such stories as proof of Indians' low and foolish character. But judgments notwithstanding, European acceptance of specially-offered guides usually allowed travel to continue, suggesting that maintaining control may have been, at least in part, what motivated chiefs to tell such elaborate horror stories.  

Observing the proper protocols could also open a route into a chief's heart and land with potentially important implications for the path of future alliances, trade, and colonizing. Samuel Champlain discovered this when in 1610 the gift of a hatchet to an Ottawa chief made the man "as happy and pleased . . . as if I had made him some rich gift." Of course the founder of Quebec had given the leader a rich gift, regardless of how slightly the French valued such utilitarian objects. But more important, the gift exchange followed traditional protocols governing interaction between such parties. Champlain's adhering to the rules was in and of itself as much cause for joy as the gift itself. The result of the exchange was that the two leaders "entered into conversation" about the road.
ahead, during which the chief granted his guests access to his lands via a map of the land which he drew “with charcoal on a piece of tree-bark.” By getting it right the Frenchman made a friend. In this case Champlain’s unwitting adherence to native protocols enabled not just his journey and further reconnaissance, but was also an initial building block in larger native alliance.

Hand-picked guides, and properly requested and formally granted maps were ways that a leader could control the course of outlanders’ travel, but many headmen also offered to accompany European travelers themselves. By joining the party, leaders simultaneously lent their own prestige to guests’ wanderings and maintained their own control over territorial access and the distribution of geographic knowledge. Pierre LeMoyne d’Iberville’s 1700 mapping trip in the endless serpentine rivers of the Mississippi delta had the blessings and accompaniment of the local Bayogoula chief and a canoe “in which there were eight of his own men.” The same chief also sent guides to accompany the French on various other legs of their tour. In 1666 an Edisto headman in South Carolina offered his services as pilot for an English coastal cruise, promising the ship’s master “a broad deep entrance” for the ship and “a large welcome and plentiful entertainment and trade” for its party. The Edisto Indian’s actions assured favorable

that controlling that knowledge once possessed would be a strategy for retaining political power.

124 Iberville’s Gulf Journals, 64.
trading conditions for the people of his town. Prestigious travelers often warranted prestigious companions. The Oneida chief who wished to bring home Moravian missionaries John Cammerhoff and David Ziesberger in 1750 wanted to show these popular men that they were more than welcome in his country and thereby to reap the social rewards that came from their friendship. The unnamed Oneida’s desire was made more pressing by the fact that the German clergymen had already visited the Senecas, Cayugas, and Onondagas and the chief did not want his people to be left out of the missionaries’ tour.¹²⁶ Halfway across the continent, when La Vérendrye took his leave of the Mandans, one village chief accompanied his party for the better part of a day, turning back only after “he made great demonstration of the regret he felt” at the traders’ departure.¹²⁷ Some guests were simply too important to be attended by anyone but those of the highest status.

For the Onondaga headman Garakontié, that was true vis a vis the French traders and blackrobes who became frequent guests in Iroquoia in the 1660s. Garakontié used his voice and influence to aid French interests at a time when factional infighting tore at the stability and unity of many Iroquois villages. Garakontié built on his domestic prestige and used the role of travel guide and aide to protect and enhance the status of his French allies. He also used his physical presence on the trail to indicate his colonial sympathies and to attach his prestige to his French friends. This francophile leader went out of way to accompany French travelers in and out of his lands and used his skills in trailside

However, the Indian’s name “Cassique” suggests that he himself was a leader of some sort or at least claimed to be one.

¹²⁷ Journals of Vérendrye, 353.
diplomacy to turn enemy “hatchets in another direction” and to save the lives of French captives.¹²⁸ He escorted French parties to Montreal and in exchange was graciously treated to the finest the trade town had to offer, acts that both recognized and reinforced his status as a man of influence. On one occasion in 1661, Garakontié and a group of elders went more than six miles down the trail to welcome an arriving Jesuit. The custom of welcoming visitors outside a town’s enclosure was well established, but usually such rituals took place less than a mile from the gate posts. In an act that the priest saw as “an honor never, as a rule, paid to other ambassadors,” Garakontié used travel and accompaniment as symbols of loyalty and ways to bestow prestige on the visitors.¹²⁹ The culmination of Garakontié’s francophilia was his conversion to the blackrobes’ faith in an elaborate ceremony in Quebec in 1670.¹³⁰

Guidance could help foster Indian-European alliances, but with alliances came obligations. Colonial officials and missionaries came to see providing guides and porters as the responsibility of allied tribes and villages. When colonial representatives of New York needed aid to get to a council at Oneida in the fall of 1700, they clearly expected it from the Mohawk sachems at the town of Canaedsishore. The sachems provided four men to carry their bags and help along the trail. Even though two of the guides ultimately

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¹²⁸ JR. 47:97.
¹³⁰ Richter, Ordeal of the Longhouse, 115; also 112, 114, 117-18, 130-32, 141, 181.
proved unwilling, at least the sachems fulfilled their part of the bargain.\textsuperscript{131} The sense of obligation that informed many headmen’s decisions was summed up by a Beaver Indian elder who sent his own nephew along with Alexander Mackenzie on his 1793 trek through the Canadian Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific Ocean. He told his departing kinsman “my nephew, your departure makes my heart painful. The white people may be said to rob us of you.” The chief feared that the party would come to trouble in hostile territory and “may never more return” home. But in the end, obligation trumped worries; “were you not with the Chief [Mackenzie] I know not what I should do, but he requires your attendance and you must follow him.”\textsuperscript{132}

Returning home was a concern shared by Indians and colonists, and headmen also had to consider the realities of life with European neighbors. Supplying guides could be a good insurance policy against unforeseen disasters, and some offers of guides were simply to protect hapless European wanderers from harm in the recognition that when colonists wanted revenge they were often indiscriminate about their targets. The assigning of two Tuscororas by their village headman to escort home a lost Baron Cristoph Von Graffenried on the eve of the 1712 Tuscorora War smacks of exactly this kind of concern.\textsuperscript{133}

Garakontie used travel as a way to attach his own prestige to his friends. But for some headmen, guiding Europeans played a more central role in their own personal


\textsuperscript{132} Mackenzie, Journals, 262.
identities and in maintaining prestige with their own people and trade partners. One such man was the late-eighteenth-century Chipewyan leader and fur trade "captain" Matonabbee, who lived most of his life on western Canada's Shield and the flat tundras ominously named the "Barren Grounds." By the 1760s, Chipewyan life was deeply connected to the subarctic fur trade and the flow of goods from English supply points, and Indian, Englishman, and métis alike lived in a complex world of economic reliance and mutual obligation. Europe's voracious demand for beaver pelts facilitated sharp declines in eastern beaver populations. The result was that much of colonial trade history is the story of seeking ever more western sources of animals. Forts located on the edges of Hudson Bay or on navigable rivers served as the trade centers in this world of exchange, and the Chipewyans were perfectly suited and situated to become the middlemen between coastal traders and western inland tribes. These tribes, such as the Blackfeet, Dogrubs, and Yellowknifes did not want to make the long hard trips to English forts, fearing that they would starve or freeze along the way. But many Chipewyan bands adapted their seasonal hunting way of life to the cycles and demands of the fur trade and in doing so made themselves indispensable. The Chipewyans who trekked the

135 Yerbury, Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 17-59.
arduous miles to distant peoples in order to bring the latter's furs to English traders were
the vital connection between English ships and distant supplies of pelts.

In this world, alliances and prosperity went hand-in-hand. Forts, although
nominally English, were often home to dozens of local Crees and Chipewyans—the
“Home Guard” Indians—who performed the vital daily tasks of fort life and also played a
key role in the trade by accompanying trade parties and even hunting. Close ties between
English traders and local Indians were common as lone Englishmen married Indian
women and thus entered the native kinship web. Close ties to the trade could bring
considerable material comfort in the form of warm, quick-drying woolens, metal tools,
firearms, and numerous geegaws with which to acquire all and sundry. But this comfort
came at a price—a powerful reliance on the trade and on trade partners. Good working
alliances with Europeans were essential for group survival, and a headman who could
deliver this diplomatic windfall was indeed a provider. Obviously, bringing furs to trade
was one vital component of maintaining friendship. But providing other services, literally
going the extra mile as a guide, for example, was a sure way for a leader to maintain his
people's comfort and prosperity while ensuring his own prestige. Matonabbee was a
master of this sort of politics.

The Hudson’s Bay Company traders on the bay’s western edge came to rely on
Matonabbee as conveyer and provider and he played central roles as both planner and
guide in several northern explorations. Samuel Hearne, who spent considerable time
under Matonabbee’s care and guidance, called him “the greatest man in the country,” an
Matonabbee was practically born for the role of fur captain, guide, and diplomat. He was the son of a Chipewyan father and a captive woman sold by the Crees. After his father’s death, Matonabbee became the adopted son of English governor Richard Norton, who may even have arranged the marriage of the Indian boy’s parents. Raised by the Home Guard Indians, Matonabbee spent his formative years in the shadow of Fort Prince of Wales at the mouth of Manitoba’s Churchill River on the western edge of Hudson Bay. There he learned the Cree language spoken by the locals. He also learned English and came to understand the ways and beliefs of the fort’s English occupants. As the English sought to expand their trade base westward after the fall of New France, Matonabbee was a natural ally. As a headman he knew the mixture of placation and threat needed to maintain group cohesion in the loosely organized, often fractious, consensus-based world of native politics. His travels taught him the fine art of tundra survival and afforded him geographic knowledge, itself a source of prestige among Indians and English alike. In 1767 Matonabbee and another Chipewyan named Idotleezay traveled deep into Yellowknife and Eskimo territories and returned south with useful information about western Canada’s Arctic coast and the region’s waterways. They also offered a route to the much-rumored

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137 Samuel Hearne, *A Journey From Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, and 1772* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1911), 140.
139 See June Helm, “Matonabbee’s Map,” *Arctic Anthropology*, 26:2 (1989): 28-47. Governor Richard Norton commissioned this particular expedition and the result was a map, Norton’s copy of which still exists. On the map the curvy Canadian coastline is straightened into a single line, but Helm’s cartographic analysis of the map confirms the accuracy of its placement of rivers and basins. For more on Indian maps and mapping, see G. Malcolm Lewis, “The Indigenous Maps and Mapping of North American
copper mines on the coast, the possibility of which had intrigued the English since early in the century.\textsuperscript{140} With English commercial interest piqued, Matonabbee offered to escort Englishmen across the forbidding "barren grounds" of the Canadian Subarctic and onto a waterway optimistically dubbed the Coppermine River.

The Hudson's Bay Company traders at Fort Prince of Wales tried three times between 1769 and 1771 to get to the Coppermine River with only the third attempt succeeding.\textsuperscript{141} Winter is the best time for travel on western Canada's rocky tundra, as the snow smothers out endless miles of ankle-breaking rocks and pitfalls. But winter also brings with it extreme weather which only the most expert traveler can navigate successfully. The Englishmen on the Coppermine trips were particularly dependent on the skills and cooperation of their Indian guides. The first attempt to reach the river's mouth barely got underway before the mostly Chipewyan Indian guides quickly lost faith in sailor-turned-Arctic-explorer Samuel Hearne and his two English companions. Using the night's cover the guides slipped off and went hunting on their own, that having been their real desire in the first place. Although the head guide Chawchinahaw covered for his deserting friends, dwindling food supplies and the almost overpowering desire to set off on the winter's hunt finally forced the ill-equipped Englishmen and Home Guard Indians to turn back to the warmth and shelter of the fort's stone walls; the Chipewyan guides went off to hunt caribou. The whole failure took only forty-one days. Hearne set off on

his second attempt about two months later, but again was thwarted from reaching his goal. A timely rescue by Matonabbee saved the lives of the second small group of English sailors and Home Guard Indians. Poor planning, the loss of Hearne’s quadrant, and the region’s unpredictable harsh weather left the party huddled together waiting to freeze to death—usually a short wait on the frosty barren grounds. But Matonabbee, who knew of the planned expedition, soon arrived at their makeshift camp with food and warm otter skins. Revived, taught how to make the essential snowshoes, and graciously feted by Matonabbee and his northerners “in the southern style,” the party lived to trek another day.142

The third expedition was the charm, and its success was in no small measure due to the active involvement of Matonabbee in the planning phase. The Chipewyan’s skilled hand guided all aspects of the expedition’s planning and execution. Matonabbee saw to it that the right people came along and throughout the trip he was an authoritative presence, calling halts when needed, authorizing camp sites, negotiating with Indians along the way, and keeping his own brand of order in the party. Hearne and the fort’s mixed-blood governor Moses Norton wrote and spoke of the trip as if it were their doing, but in truth it was Matonabbee’s. The result was a hybrid hunting/exploration excursion with him in charge. Matonabbee took his group on the route he and Idoteezay followed a few years earlier. They went northwest through Manitoba and Saskatchewan to the edge of Lake Athabasca. From there they headed northward to the mouth of the shallow and rocky Coppermine River. The group left Fort Prince of Wales on December 7, 1770 and reached the mouth of the Coppermine River on July 13, 1771.

141 The events of these expeditions will be covered in more detail in subsequent chapters.
Matonabbee’s status as ‘the greatest man in the country” owed a great deal to his successful association with his English friends and particularly the Hudson’s Bay Company. His reputation as a man of great abilities brought him recognition among both the English and his own people. From the English perspective, he was a man who could deliver furs and keep other Indians coming to Hudson’s Bay Company posts, and his role as guide reinforced their faith in him. To those who followed him, he was a man who could ensure prosperity. In the mixed world of the eighteenth-century fur trade, these two sources of prestige blended and reinforced each other. Matonabbee was so aware that his fate, fortune, and manhood were all tightly enmeshed with company fortunes that when in 1782 American-allied French raiders captured Fort Prince of Wales and carted away its residents, a distraught Matonabbee tied a rope around his neck and hanged himself.143 With his friends’ reputation so damaged by their vulnerability to the French, and the fabric of his trading world torn apart, Matonabbee must have felt that his star would soon fall too. The quick snap of the rope sealed not only Matonabbee’s fate but also those of his six wives and four children who starved to death in the winter’s chill of 1783.144

Nestabeck was another Chipewyan who used guiding to strengthen his prestigious connections with English fur traders.145 Like Matonabbee, Nestabeck was a native

142 Hearne, Journey From Prince of Wales’s Fort. (1911), 100.
143 Speck, Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage, 145. Speck concludes that Matonabbee was “disillusioned about the impregnability of the fort and the infallibility of his English friends.” But he does not deal with the fact that Matonabbee’s personal prestige was tied to that of the English Hudson’s Bay Company traders at the Churchill River.
144 Speck, Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage, 145.
145 Nestabeck also appears in English documents under the names “The English Chief“ (Mackenzie) and “Aw gee nah“ (Peter Fidler).
headman and fur captain. Although as a young man Nestabeck traded with the Hudson’s Bay Company and even went to the Coppermine River with Matonabbee in 1770, his greater service was to the Montreal-based North West Company. After Matonabbee killed himself, Nestabeck appears to have taken over his role as supreme Chipewayan headman—in English eyes at least. He also built up his own stature by shifting his people’s alliance to the ambitious North West Company and then using his geographical knowledge and organizational skills to help the company expand the scope of its trade network. If anything, Nestabeck had a greater reputation than Matonabbee among the English. In the last quarter of the eighteenth-century he rubbed elbows with most of the big names in Canadian western exploration. Men like Peter Pond, Peter Fidler, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and David Thompson all owed a portion of their reputation as adventurers to the aid, advice, and guidance of the “great Chepawyan Chief.”

Nestabeck’s best-documented trip was the one he took to the Arctic coast with the Scots fur trader and western Canadian explorer Alexander Mackenzie in 1789. The trip was a western version of the one Matonabbee led Hearne on in 1770 and like Hearne’s was also an attempt to locate a new water passage into Canada’s fur bearing western lands. Their route passed through the western side of the North West Territories’ Great Slave River and from there northward along what is now the Mackenzie River to its delta. Nestabeck and his people would have only vaguely known this land. Consequently, Nestabeck was less a source of geographic information than a coordinator, negotiator,

146 Mackenzie, Journals, 163.
interpreter, and wilderness skills expert. Throughout the trip Nestabeck worked to maintain cohesion in the group and to gain the best information possible from discussions with people met along the way. As was often the case, it was Nestabeck’s skill and knowledge, his people, and other local Indian guides that allowed the forceful and demanding Mackenzie to perform the explorers’ tasks of observation and measurement.\textsuperscript{148}

Both Matonabbee and Nestabeck mixed the Chipewyan’s traditional prestige of the great hunter and provider with the material wealth and titles available through the fur trade. They turned their familiarity with Canada’s vast Northwest into prosperity and security for their people and status for themselves. At the forts these men were treated with the respect due men of stature. Dressed in rank redolent red coats and showered with gifts of trinkets, rum, and tobacco, these fur captains were cocks of the walk—so much so that their carriage occasionally tweaked some English observers’ sensibilities. With recognition came status, with status came followers, and with followers came more recognition since bigger bands could carry more furs and earn greater rewards for all. Headmen such as Nestabeck and Matonabbee were the points through which wealth entered their communities, positions which made them indispensable men for their people. In order to hold onto this fine condition, Matonabbee and Nestabeck had to fend off jabs at their authority from aspiring members of their bands. They also were willing to push themselves and their people ever harder and farther. Guiding fit perfectly into this

\textsuperscript{148} Michael Bliss, “Conducted Tour,”\textsuperscript{148} \textit{The Beaver}, 69 (1989): 16-24. Bliss argues that Mackenzie’s guides conducted him on a tour of the region. Bliss underestimates the degree to which Mackenzie actually shaped the trip’s pace and tone. I will pick up this theme more directly in Chapter Three. See also William H. Goetzmann and Glyndwr
equation. Serving as a guide or planner on a trip like Hearne’s or Mackenzie’s was in itself a recognition of a headman’s talents, value, and straightforward manliness.\footnote{149}

Economic considerations suffused almost every aspect of fur trade life, but men like Matonabbee and Nestabeck were far from being mere hirelings, even though some Englishmen may have seen them as such. True, these guides received material rewards—looking much like pay—for their services, but these remunerations came through the protocols of native gift exchange. An employee provides labor in exchange for pay. But these guides received gifts in recognition of their status, friendship, and ability, and then they provided services as part of an exchange between friends and equals. Gift exchange carried with it obligations of return, alliance, friendship, reliance, support and so on, and Matonabbee and Nestabeck sat at the connection point between peoples, with their labor and organization as one side of a long skein of gifts between friends. This exchange system reversed the standard employment paradigm in which the one providing the pay is theoretically the boss. In Matonabbee’s and Nestabeck’s view they were great men who acted out of friendship and not as mere wage earners.\footnote{150}


\footnote{150} The meaningful differences between gift exchange and pay constitute some of the toughest questions and some of the longest debates in anthropology. The literature is vast, and debate has often focused on the extent to which gifts are free offerings or come with implied quid pro quos of return. Most scholars follow Bronislaw Malinowski and Marcel Mauss and see that gifting is part of a socio-economic tie that used material goods to unite people and peoples. The obligation of return is as much a part of the gift as the gift itself. This raises troubling questions about the differences between Indian and European economic models and if carried too far threatens to blur distinctions that historical actors...
But there were many Indians during the colonial era who did hire themselves out to Europeans as guides, hunters, and porters in a growing trail-based economy. Whereas leaders like Garokontié, Matonabbee, and Nestabeck used accompaniment as part of a long-term relationship between their people and European traders and clergymen, hired Indian guides often acted as independent agents, using their services for their own or their families' benefit. The increasing number of traveling Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries multiplied the number of opportunities for Indians to accompany European travelers. Prominent explorers or traders sought out native community leaders knowing that these men often held the geographic and diplomatic keys to successful travel within their own territory. But missionaries, diplomats, naturalists, surveyors, and tourists often cared less about the status of their companions than their willingness to come along on a trip for a good price. The wages for these services took many forms, ranging from the blanket given Hans by the Dutch travelers to the sixteen shillings in cash paid by John Bartram for an Iroquois guide to get him to Oswego in the summer of 1743.\textsuperscript{151} The terms of travel employment varied, from spontaneous agreements in which payment clung to the protocols of gift exchange to the pay-for-service structure that constituted employment in the European economic mold.


\textsuperscript{151} Bartram, \textit{A Journey to Onondaga in 1743}, 62.
received gifts of rum and brandy, which the Swiss colonist offered "out of thankfulness." Similarly, the Iroquois man who helped Harmen Van den Bogaert make one of the earliest European treks across Iroquoia in the winter of 1634-35 received for his troubles "one half a piece of duffel, two axes, two knives, and two awls" as well as a pair of shoes. Guiding earned these men rewards, but there was (as far as is documented) no advance negotiation of price or the very European idea that certain acts or goods had fixed objective values. European travelers frequently noted that they had "obtained an Indian...to guide us," or that they "hired" an "Indian to be our guide," or even "engaged" the service "of a young Indian" while on the trail. But did the Indians in question see themselves as entering into a European-style employee-employer relationship with its assumed inequalities? These "hired" guides may instead have seen themselves as doing a favor and receiving gifts in exchange for, and in recognition of, their skill and generosity.

But when Indians did overtly sell their labors, they could be deft negotiators of pay and work conditions. Many guides set the price of their service before offering it,
as did the Ute man who “requested” a fee of “two hunting knives and sixteen strings of
glass beads” in exchange for escorting Franciscan fathers Escalante and Dominguez
through northern Colorado in the summer of 1776. Fray Francisco Silvestre Valez de Escalante, “Diary and Itinerary,” in Herbert E.
Bolton, ed., Pageant in the Wilderness: The Story of the Escalante Expedition to the
Interior Basin (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1950), 149.

The French-allied Blackfoot leader Wappenessew wheedled a down payment of “a little powder and c.” from Anthony
Henday for promising to aid his return to Hudson Bay in 1755. Likewise, when the
price was right, some Indians were willing to act as guides when they otherwise may not
have been so willing. For example, a group of Spaniards who spent the spring of 1689
searching out the remains of Sieur de La Salle’s short-lived French colony on the Texas
Gulf Coast learned from two local Indians that there were some Frenchmen at a
settlement two days away. The men initially made no offer to help the Spaniards get
there. But a fee of “some tobacco, knives, and other things” was good enough to get the
two men to agree to be guides for the trip. Yet in some instances no amount of cajoling
or promise of wages could move an unwilling prospective guide. John Lawson and his
companions discovered this when they tried to hire a seven-foot-tall Santee man with
whom they had passed the night. The man “seem’d unwilling” to guide them through a

Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York:


Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed., Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706,
Original Narratives in Early American History (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons,
1930), 395.
nearby Carolina swamp, and recognizing that it would be unwise to anger a giant they
"press'd him no farther about it." ¹⁵⁹

Fur traders lamented that when Indians expressly hired as guides or porters did
not wish to continue in their tasks, they simply took their leave or refused to carry their
allotted load. Even worse was the habit of many porters of simply taking what they
wanted out of the stores they were charged with porting when wages or conditions were
not to their liking. Samuel Hearne, perhaps recalling his own abandonment at the hands
of Chawchinahaw, was particularly concerned that the trade’s reliance on Indian aid and
a general lack of ability to enforce a satisfactory work ethic made his company the “game
and laughingstock” of every other fur trade outfit. ¹⁶⁰ Many of these Indians were the
Home Guard Crees who made a living by hiring themselves onto trade trips or by
practicing skilled trades in and around the forts. But many of these same people were the
followers of fur captains like Matonabbee and Nestabeck who used the same skills as the
captains but for more personal or familial ends.

Pay mattered, and when a better deal came along many guides were willing to
follow the money. During his 1749 travels in the spring air of New York’s Hudson
Valley, Peter Kalm and friends discovered this as their plans halted when the Indian
guides they had hired for thirty shillings abandoned them for “an Englishman who gave
them more.” The conscientious guides returned Kalm’s fifteen-shilling deposit before

¹⁶⁰ Tyrrell, Journals of Hearne and Tumor, 193. See also Paul Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986), 51-80 for a discussion of Indians and fur trade employees and partners.
trading employers.\textsuperscript{161} Similarly, a young Indian guide near Newcastle, Delaware in 1680 simply made excuses and left when an offer of a duffel coat seemed shy of what he wanted.\textsuperscript{162} When Moravian missionary and Pennsylvania Indian emissary Frederick Post’s Indian guides learned of the English defeat at Fort Ticonderoga in July 1758, the leader of Post’s unnerved guides, a Delaware named Essoweyoualand whom the English called “Shamokin Daniel,” checked Post to make sure that “he should be satisfied for his trouble” in continuing the trip. With the assurance that “any service for the province” in Post’s opinion “would be paid,” the guides continued.\textsuperscript{163} Essoweyoualand’s concern about his pay reveals a problem that faced paid Indian companions. He, and others of his acquaintance, had had the disappointing experience of \textit{not} being rewarded at the end of journey. Daniel’s simple question showed that while there were material rewards in the travel business, pay was often no sure thing, and guides and porters knew it.\textsuperscript{164}

Some Indians fully embraced the market for Indian skills and turned the guides’ sure feet or the hunters’ keen eyes into accompaniment careers of sorts. When Carolina naturalist John Lawson wandered through the marshes and rivers of lowland South Carolina at the turn of the eighteenth century, he was aided by a series of guides and hunters, all of whom seem to have had long experience in this growing trade. Men like Santee Jack, who Lawson noted had a reputation as a “good hunter and a well humour’d fellow,” took Lawson and friends to the Congaree Indians. Another guide named Enoe

\textsuperscript{162} Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 149. This theme will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.
Will was well known to the English as a man with an "agreeable temper" and reputedly was "always ready to serve the English, not out of gain, but real affection." Reputation aside, Will was often paid for his services.

Enoe Will and his ilk are shadowy figures at the periphery of colonies and documents alike. In many respects, he resembles the Bayonne Algonquian Hans, in that both were leaders among their people and both lived native lives at the edge of European colonial settlement. For both, guiding wove together many of the ideas, needs, and goods that motivated and rewarded traveling companions. Men like Nestabeck and Matonabbee built their status and independence by controlling access to lands and riches. Men like Garakontié and Matchqueon lived lives removed enough from European settlement that they could be beneficent with their people and their own persons and aid European travelers when they wished. But Will and Hans did not have the control over goods, souls, or territory that propped up these other headmen. Life in the shadows of European roofs and spires meant that maintaining good relations with potentially troublesome neighbors was vital to survival. Friendly guiding, and the reputation as men of "agreeable temper" it brought, were themselves ways to guard personal autonomy—a considerable reward, as Hans, Will, and countless others would have known. Will had a better knowledge of his territory than did John Lawson, but at the same time he could not have hoped to limit English access to it. Likewise he did not control the kinds of resources that could have enriched his and his people’s lives. Instead, the job of a guide for the pay of some cash or a blanket or some other item proved a good way to live on the edge and yet

164 See Merrell, Into the American Woods, 245-46 for more on Essoweyoualand.
tap into the world of goods that were in the colonial era becoming as indispensable to Indians as they were to average colonists.

Ned Bearskin was another man of stature who indulged in this sort of trailside jobbing while finding greater rewards in travel than simple pay. When Virginia planter William Byrd II and a group of surveyors, slaves, and gentry bon vivants set off to survey the line between Virginia and North Carolina during the fall of 1728, their plan was to travel light and live off the land. But Byrd, the party's leader and chronicler, soon found that his companions were "unfortunate gunners" and so made plans to hire native hunters to make up the deficit.\(^{166}\) He hired the Saponi Ned Bearskin, who was a man known as a "most able huntsman," and an unnamed companion to supply the company with meat during the trip. These Indians lived in the vicinity of Fort Christianna at Virginia's edge and on the Ocaneechee trade road. In 1717, in the wake of the Tuscarora War, the Saponis—already accustomed to moving back and forth between the dominions of Virginia and North Carolina—took up residence on the Meherrin River and placed themselves nominally under the protection of Virginia governor Alexander Spotswood. Spotswood had the fort built for their protection and armed it with five cannon; he also supplied his charges with missionaries, teachers, and European trade goods. In return the Virginia-allied Saponis, Tutelos, and Ocaneechees of Fort Christianna would serve as a frontier guard protecting tobacco plantations from marauding bands of southerly

Catawbas and northerly Iroquois. By 1728 Bearskin and his people lived as did many of Virginia’s allied Indians: their fort was an important stop on the north-south trade route that kept a steady flow of goods moving into Saponi hands. Apart from the trade, they eked out a living on a tiny six-square-mile reservation, which they could not leave without formal colonial permission. Restricted in movement, threatened with land reduction should their numbers dwindle, pressed by land-hungry settlers (the nearest English plantation was only three miles away), and reliant on sluggish and distant colonial authorities to redress their grievances, the Saponis at Fort Christianna became increasingly frustrated.\(^{167}\)

Byrd and his men asked for Bearskin’s assistance at a time when Saponi discontent with domesticated life was coming to a head. That same year a delegation of Saponis went to see if the Catawbas would aid them in getting some of their people out of Virginia jails. Soon after the Saponis gave threatening voice to their discontent, claiming that if the colony executed one of their leaders—a man named Captain Tom—they would prepare for war and then wipe out the Virginians. Within a dozen years many of these same Saponis would be living in Cayuga villages in New York and Pennsylvania, having joined the migration northward, preferring to live with their one-time native foes than with their sometime English friends.

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In this heated context, Byrd and his surveying party's very presence at the fort must have seemed like a bad portent to the Saponis. When the Saponis first moved to Fort Christianna, it was well removed from English habitations. But in the intervening years, little by little, farm by farm, the English had moved up almost to within shot of the fort's guns. Surveyors were the first harbingers of settlers soon to come, and with a lowering population and an indifferent colony the Indians must have seen the future in the party's chains, rods, and transits.

But even so the Virginians' desire for native assistance provided an opportunity for travel too good to be passed up. The fact that the English knew Ned Bearskin as a good hunter suggests that he was used to seeking out official permission to take to the woods. If so, his familiarity with colonial ways, laws, and language made him a natural choice to go with the party. And of course there were many significant rewards too. In return for his service, Bearskin received "a note" for 3 pounds sterling, "a pound of powder with shot in proportion" and the skins of all of the animals he killed which would be transported by the party's pack animals.\textsuperscript{168} Byrd noted that another reward for Bearskin was "the great knowledge he had gain'd of the country."\textsuperscript{169} Byrd's own wanderlust and sense of adventure may have made him sensitive to similar desires in others. Indeed, the chance to take a westward trip of over 250 miles was not to be passed up, especially considering how restricted Saponi movements were at the time. The chance

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
to travel a great distance in the legally secure company of Englishmen was an intangible reward as great as the promise of piles of deer skins. 170

And piles of deer skins there were. In just under two months, according to Byrd’s accounting Bearskin and partner killed at least one partridge, eight turkeys, seven bears, and twenty-six deer. 171 Most of their kills were made by stealth but they also employed the time honored method of “fire hunting,” whereby a controlled blaze served to drive animals into a prearranged killing zone. The haul in skins from this protected jaunt was of considerable worth in colonial markets, and having a free pack train to cart them made the deal even sweeter for Bearskin. Few other Indian hunters would have boasted of such numbers that fall.

Bearskin was also more than a hunter during the surveying trip. He served as sort of mascot and role model for the would-be woodsmen, who went so far as to name their little band of brothers the “Order of Ma-ooy” employing the Saponi word for a turkey’s “beard” and sporting the little trophies in their hat loops. 172 On at least one occasion Bearskin’s geographic knowledge came into play when he identified a stream that the

170 Ibid., 107. Byrd recorded that the Meherrins had “lately removed from the mouth of the Meherrin” because they were “frighten’d away from there by the late massacre committed upon 14 of their nation by the Catawbas.”
171 I take my number by counting kill references in the text. This method is imprecise at best, but is also the only way to estimate Bearskin’s total. Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line.
172 Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line, 281. Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs, 280. Brown suggests that the Virginians used the trip and the hunting to appropriate elements of native masculinity to enhance their own “manly vigor.” Brown also claims that the English hunters were embarrassingly outdone by Bearskin. This is not quite true. The colonists killed at least eighteen turkeys, six deer, and five bears. This is not a bad showing, considering that they devoted most of their time to surveying and were, as Byrd noted, pretty poor hunters. Their totals do not support Brown’s claims that the Englishmen returned usually with only the “diminutive carcasses of opossums and raccoons,” animals which were not even mentioned by Byrd.
surveying line crossed over “no less than five times” as the Hyco Creek. Byrd wrote that the Saponi “mistook” the creek for the south branch of the Roanoke River, which Byrd thought “impossible, both by reason of its narrowness and the small quantity of water that came down it.” Byrd went on to claim that Bearskin “discovering his error soon after” and assured the group that it was Hyco Creek. In fact, despite Byrd’s seeming joy at having caught his Indian companion in a geographic error, both of Bearskin’s identifications were essentially correct; the Roanoke River forks in Halifax County, Virginia where its fork again splits into three rivers, the Bansiter, the Dan, and the Hyco. The Hyco is the southernmost of the three, and its waters mingle with the Roanoke’s.

While perhaps not granted due respect as a gazetteer by Byrd and company, Bearskin nevertheless benefited considerably from his travels. The pile of fresh skins was one obvious gain. But perhaps more important than the hides’ trade value was the boost the trip gave to his reputation as a hunter at time when most Saponis could travel only few miles from Fort Christianna’s walls. The deer hides were symbols of Bearskin’s manhood; his ability to hunt and his ability to navigate in the woods successfully were both made tangible by the skins. The trip also allowed him to rub elbows with a few prominent Virginians at a time when tensions between his people and the still somewhat new Old Dominion were on the rise. How Bearskin felt about the diplomatic issues of his day is lost to time, but he may have believed his willingness to aid the Virginians could have been a salve for open political wounds. Perhaps, like Garakontié nearly sixty years earlier, Bearskin used his physical presence on the trail as a sign of alliance to be read by his own people. Whatever his views, Bearskin saw rewards in his accompaniment well.

beyond the much desired skins. The pride and satisfaction that Bearskin must have felt was evident in his farewell to the English travelers. Standing alongside the leaders of his people all of whom bore “an air of decency very uncommon,” Bearskin the hunter and traveler stood out as the “gravest of them.”\(^\text{174}\)

Whether Bearskin became friends with any of the surveying party is unknown. But many Indians did have close and enduring friendships with Europeans, and these cordial bonds were sometimes a motivation and reward for travel accompaniment. The New York area Algonquian chief Hans appeared to have had some sort of long term relationship with Gerrit Evertssen van Duyn, and his decision to accompany the Dutch travelers may have rested in part on the strength of that relationship. The Shawnee Nika and Canadian explorer La Salle had a traveling friendship that lasted over a dozen years and strayed well beyond the territory in which Nika could serve as a guide. During La Salle’s many trips around the Great Lakes, down the Mississippi, and even across the Atlantic, Nika hunted down game, acted as a scout, and in general helped to keep his friend well fed and comfortable. That Nika saw himself as occupying a special place in La Salle’s crew was revealed by a telling protestation. When the party was left in Texas bayous without a local guide, one of the Frenchmen attempted to order Nika to take the lead. Nika, who had no better knowledge of the terrain than anyone else in the group, refused claiming that it was not his responsibility and that it was the Frenchman’s “business” to guide them.\(^\text{175}\) La Salle’s penchant for surrounding himself with kinsmen and other trustworthies combined with Nika’s seeming ubiquity suggest that a close bond existed between the adventurer and the Shawnee, placing the well traveled Indian in a

\(^{174}\) Ibid., 311.
unique role. Even in La Salle’s final moments at the hands of some disgruntled members of his party, his assassins made sure to kill the Indian who was never far from the unpopular lord.

Building a friendship with respected Moravian missionaries seems to have been a significant motivation for a Cayuga man who escorted David Zeisberger and a small band of Moravian missionaries through Iroquoia in the spring of 1750. Unlike guides assigned by headmen or paid for their services, there was no indication that this man, Hahotschaunguas, was materially rewarded for his accompaniment. Instead, the Moravians seem to have tagged onto a trip that Hahotschaunguas planned to make anyway. The presence of the Cayuga’s wife, Gajehne, and the couple’s fourteen-year-old son Tagita and their four-year-old daughter Gahoe suggest the quotidian nature of their travels. This was no mobile diplomatic assembly, no carefully picked long-distance travel team, and no well-stocked trade party. Instead, this was a small family traveling through lands they all knew quite well. The Moravians were the beneficiaries of the kind of quite friendly travel accompaniment that was a time-honored tradition wherever Indians set foot on the trail. Few Europeans who experienced this kind of travel committed their experiences to paper.

A casual, though prearranged, meeting at the falls of the Susquehanna began this relaxed and friendly travel relationship. Throughout the journey, Hahotschaunguas went out of his way to act kindly toward men he clearly respected. Gifts of food and an otter marked the beginning of their travel and from then on he did what he could to

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175 Journals of La Salle, 1:55-56.
176 Cammerhoff later noted that they had originally planned to travel with the sons of Shikillemy, but they were unable to make the trip. Beauchamp, Moravian Journals, 48.
smooth their path. When the Moravians wanted to make a side trip to see a convert’s sick brother, Hahotschaunguas cheerfully agreed, deferentially telling John Christian Frederick Cammerhoff that he “was a great man and could make whatever arrangements [he] pleased.” During the trip Hahotschaunguas and his family found shelter for the travelers, hunted game, tracked down the party’s runaway horses, and led their Moravian charges through dense dark woods. When questioned by other Indians about the identity and business of the colonists, he did his best to convey the importance of the missionaries, telling one curious woman that “he did not know” their business but “this he did know,” that Cammerhoff was a “great man who was traveling to be present at the great council in Onondaga.” These words themselves were a way to clear a path through the woods by verbally separating the Moravians from the larger mass of colonials who passed through Iroquois lands. Upon arriving in Onondaga, the travelers were welcomed by the village leaders and elders, including the well-respected Cannasatego. Cammerhoff began his stay in town by offering a well-crafted speech in

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177 Ibid., 28.
178 Ibid., 41.
179 The formulation was effective enough for Ziesberg to later imitate its form when informing another Iroquois woman about their trip. Ziesberger told the baptized Oneida Margaret that Cammerhoff “was a great man and had traveled to Onondaga in the interest of [his] own affairs.” There is a gendered dimension to this form of pronouncement. In both cases it was used to inform inquisitive women about the nature of the travelers and their business. In this kind of friendly travel, the trail was often shared by native men and women, all going about their own business. Hahotschaunguas’s answer, and Zeisberg’s echo, served to provide a female fellow traveler with an outline of the information she requested. But at the same time, the formulaic response also effectively kept the details hidden as if to say that these were matters not of their concern, mirroring the gender divide that gave the village to the women and the woods to the men.
which he praised Hahotschaunguas and related the route of travel to his rapt audience. The elders “smiled. . .very kindly” and gratefully received a gift of pipe and tobacco.¹⁸⁰

Cammerhoff understood Indian protocols and played well by Iroquois rules. This ability allowed him and his party to travel through Iroquoia as if they themselves were native to the land—almost as if they were in fact members of Hahotschaunguas’s family. The words of respect, offered not so much to each other but more importantly to others, were part of a web of respect and obligation that typified how most Indians preferred to deal with people. If Hahotschaunguas received material reward for his assistance, it is not recorded. Also, there is no indication that this Cayuga man and his family had any spiritual connection to the Moravians. Religion never came up during the trip, and no one in Hahotschaunguas’s family bore the tell-tale European baptismal name of a convert. Instead, Cammerhoff and his party seem to have been the beneficiaries of a friendship motivated by the intangible but desirable rewards of having done the right thing.

Whether economic or social, the rewards Indians received for their time on the trail were as varied as the travelers themselves. The New Jersey Algonquian Hans got his blanket and the Dutchmen got their guided trip; Matonabbee got to be the “greatest man in the country” and the Hudson’s Bay Company got a regular supply of porters; Hahotschaunguas got to travel in prestigious company and the Moravians got to go to Onondaga. Similarly, while the territorial messages lurking behind the assignment of guides by headmen may have been lost on European explorers, both adventurer and headman could walk away from the meeting feeling quite pleased with the outcome.

¹⁸⁰ Beauchamp, Moravian Journals, 48.
Indians were not only successful navigators on the trail, they were also highly skilled at turning Europeans’ need for travel assistance to their own varied benefits.
CHAPTER THREE

CONTROL

On a spring morning in 1652, Pierre Espirit Radisson, then the captive of a Mohawk family, tried to wake his new kinsmen. He shook his new brother, who blearily sat up and looked about. Everyone was still asleep, and so he lay back down and let his mind drift back to the real world of dreams.\(^{181}\) In another place, nearly a century later, Ned Bearskin, the Saponi Indian hired in 1728 by William Byrd II and his party of Virginia surveyors, urged his companions not to mix in the same pot the deer and turkey meat he had brought in. He told them that to do so would “certainly spoil his luck in hunting” the next day.\(^{182}\) In yet another place at the end of the eighteenth century, a group of Indian guides made it clear to their Scots companion that there was no point in burying bags of much-needed supplies along waterways that they would not see again this season. The Scotsman, Alexander Mackenzie, nevertheless cached “two bags of pemmican” for future use, despite the protests of his guides.\(^{183}\)

In each of these instances, an Indian or a European traveler attempted to impose their own way of doing things on an alien partner. In Radisson’s case it was through the application of a European sense of time which dictated that a work day began with the

\(^{181}\) Arthur Adams, ed., The Explorations of Pierre Espirit Radisson (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1961), 7.
\(^{182}\) Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line, 193.
\(^{183}\) Mackenzie, Journals, 179.
sun's first rays. For Ned Bearskin, the careless eating habits of his companions jeopardized his ability to kill more game. After all, he had come along to hunt, and what was the point of hunting if English disrespect chased away all the game. For Mackenzie's guides, the trip they were on was a leg of their annual hunting trek through Canada's stony northern tundra. When on those treks, one always moved forward, following herds of caribou. Backtracking was not only pointless, it could be deadly, because it entailed moving back into territory already hunted. For Mackenzie, though, this was an exploration—ideally a straight back-and-forth proposition—and when one got to one's destination, one turned around and went back home via the most expeditious route possible. If everything had been planned and executed correctly, the best way back would be along the same route in.

Once on the trail together, Indians and Europeans faced not only the rigors and hardships of colonial era travel. They also faced the complex social dimensions inherent in traveling with people different from themselves. Indians and Europeans brought an array of differing skills and assumptions to the trail and often saw trailside events through very different lenses. Furthermore, neither group was by any means homogeneous, which meant that divisions and structures within different societies further complicated social life on the trail. Discrepancies between the many methods, reasons, and rewards of travel blended with travelers' differing habits to ensure that personal conflicts, small and large, fleeting and consequential, would not only be a part of trail life. They would also in some cases significantly shape the course and results of travel.

Rules were often at the core of these conflicts. Whether trying to get a sleepy party to their paddles, or hoping to correct unwise dining habits, Indians and Europeans
operated from various sets of rules which defined and limited their actions. Each new crisis and every travel decision opened up the question of whose rules to follow. While some travelers were content to work within another’s set of rules (at least temporarily), others were quick to assert the primacy of their own ways of doing things. These assertions took many forms, ranging from outright plays for the control of travel or a companion’s behavior to more subtle tactics such as belligerence or even picking up and leaving. All of these instances, whether momentary or having long term consequences, were a fundamental part of the subtle game of tug-of-war played by Indian and European fellow travelers.

For Indians (who had the option to leave more often than Europeans), choosing to stay with or quit a party was one simple way to assert control over their time and set personal tolerance limits when confronted by an overly demanding travel partner or an uncomfortable situation. The annals of travel are full of Europeans lamenting that their guides, porters, interpreters, and other native companions had “failed” them in one way or another. The reasons behind these “failures” are as varied as the travelers themselves. There are, however, a few general categories that at least offer a fleeting glimpse of the logic these Indians employed and reveal that what was to Europeans a vexing and perplexing letdown was for their native companions a small part of a larger strategy to maintain control over travel.

Territorial boundaries offer one well-documented reason for Indians begging off. European travel plans—particularly those of explorers—often set out specifically to cross native boundaries in hopes of seeing more land. But for Indian travelers, who not only may have been leaving their geographical comfort zone, but also may have been risking
life and limb by entering hostile lands, crossing borders was frequently a dangerous gamble. “Our guides would go no further, for fear of falling into the hands of their enemies,” reported one French traveler, and a Spaniard found that his interpreter “would not go beyond this place” when he arrived at a boundary. The interpreter was “very pleased” when he was released from his agreement and allowed to go home.\textsuperscript{184} An Algonquian man traveling in 1609 gave up his place in a French shallop because he was “afraid lest he shall be carried off” to distant lands by the far-ranging French and fall into the hands of the “enemies of his tribe.”\textsuperscript{185} For Europeans, crossing these lines was part and parcel of exploration and travel; for their native companions it was sometimes too risky an endeavor.

Other Indians found different reasons for leaving Europeans alone to fend for themselves, and European chroniclers recorded many, sometimes contradictory, reasons why their guides had “failed them.” A young Caddoan man who promised to guide La Salle and his party to the town of Cahainihoua soon made himself scarce on the pretext of needing to return home, since he had “forgotten a piece of hard dried skin he had to make him shoes.”\textsuperscript{186} A Mohawk man who was to make a 1713 trip with New York colonial representatives demurred, claiming that “he was sick.” His suspicious European would-be companions, however, “could not see it” and concluded instead that the man was just afraid to go on the trail.\textsuperscript{187} A Cree interpreter left the French fur trader La Vérendrye in an awkward spot when the former chose to follow after “an Assiniboin woman of whom he was enamoured, but who had refused to remain with him.” A party of eighteenth-

\textsuperscript{184} Journeys of La Salle, 1:141; Hammond and Rey, Don Juan de Oñate, 138.
\textsuperscript{185} Champlain, Works, 1:415.
\textsuperscript{186} Journeys of La Salle, 2:182-83.
century Englishmen had to leave a Santee village without a guide when their man Scipio became too drunk to continue.\textsuperscript{188} Similarly, New York envoys Hansen and Brugh had to seek out new travel aid when the Iroquois man who was to be their guide was “was drunk, and so did not go.”\textsuperscript{189} Others offered no reason at all, they merely became literal manifestations of the proverbial “vanishing Indian.” Wenceslaus Link, for example, was beset by guides who “knew how to elude” him and his party of Baja-bound missionaries, and night after night these unwilling guides slipped away as the clergymen slept.\textsuperscript{190}

European chroniclers generally had a few simple explanations for why these Indians pulled up stakes: they were afraid of their enemies or they were afraid of their travel companions, and sometimes they were simply tired. Other times Indians acted according to what Europeans often saw as a duplicitous nature. Most European explanations generally fit into a framework that denigrated Indians and positioned Europeans as bold trailblazers. But another possibility may lurk beneath the easy chauvinist explanations of colonial travelers. When the hard-driving Scots Canadian explorer Alexander Mackenzie made two westward trips in the late eighteenth century, one to the Arctic Ocean and the other across the Rockies to the Pacific, he habitually insisted that his parties follow a rigorous course of early and long days. His demanding timetable irritated his native guides to no small degree. Mackenzie wrote that on both of his trips his guides “complain[ed] much” about his preference for “hard marching” and on occasion made known their intention to leave the party because of its “mode of traveling.” Similarly, when the Mississippi Delta’s flood water got chest high in the

\textsuperscript{187} Hansen in \textit{DRSNY}, 5:375.
\textsuperscript{188} Journals of Vérendrye, 334; Lawson, \textit{New Voyage to Carolina}, 23.
\textsuperscript{189} Hansen in \textit{DRSNY}, 4:804.
spring of 1700, Iberville’s Taensas guides decided enough was enough and left the
French to muddle through the still-chilly swamps themselves. Iberville bitterly wrote that
“they do not like to wade naked through the water,” as if he and his companions did!191
Mackenzie’s and Iberville’s guides spoke their minds and in so doing hinted at what
might have been in the minds of countless Indians who saw no reason to travel farther
with Europeans. The twin themes here are dissatisfaction with the relentless demands of
some Europeans asserting their authority over a party, and the Indians’ inability to control
the pace, flow, direction, and meaning of travel in ways that made sense to them.
Europeans rarely understood that their native companions may have been uncomfortable
in their company for myriad reasons. When faced with odd, uncomfortable, and
dangerous situations, these Indians did what they could to beg out of their plight in the
most face-saving way possible. Were the boundaries cited by so many travelers real or
only invented spontaneously to escape an undesirable trip? Was the shallop-bound Indian
really afraid of where the Frenchmen might take him, or did he simply not enjoy or see
value in pulling at a French oar all day long? By citing his fear of distant foes, he used the
world’s social geography as a way to get out of the trip. This was a fairly powerful
argument, and an effective way to maintain control over his own time while insisting on
his vision of what was appropriate travel.

And what about guides whose drunkenness kept them from being useful guides and
companions? Did the Englishmen leave without Scipio because he was too drunk to go,
or did Scipio become too drunk so as not to have to go? Were New York emissaries
Henrick Hansen and Major Cornelis van Brugh, two men who never seemed too popular

190 Burrus, Link’s Diary, 63-69.
in the Iroquois villages they visited, passed off by a man who did not want to travel in their company? There are no clear answers to these questions, but there are clues. Take the case of the Delaware man named Willamegicken. Willamegicken had some experience traveling with Englishmen in the service of Pennsylvania during the Seven Years War, and had a reputation as a prominent man among his people and his English neighbors. In July 1758 he was hired to accompany Frederick Post from Philadelphia to the Ohio for the price of one horse. But he never made the trip. After keeping Post waiting for some time, Willamegicken met Post, but "being very drunk, he could proceed no further." With war all throughout the backcountry, this kind of travel was a real risk and Post had difficulty persuading other Indians to go with him, despite some well-practiced persuasion techniques and the ability to bestow the province's bounty on his companions. No less a figure than Delaware leader and diplomatist Teedyuscung warned Post that he "was afraid that the Indians would kill" the Moravian or even that "The French would get" him.\(^{192}\) In light of Teedyuscung's words of warning, it is possible that Willamegicken drank excessively to get out of the trip without an argument from Post, and perhaps also avoid the often painful accusation of cowardice from his friends, both native and English. Drunkenness was certainly a scourge in many colonial-era Indian societies, as it was for many colonists as well. But for Indians, drunkenness was usually not understood in quite the same way as it was in colonial society. For Indians, being drunk was akin to not being one's self—particularly when it came to the ramifications of the actions of men and women in drunken stupors. Just as violence or destruction wrought while on a bender was to be excused and blamed on the liquor, getting drunk

\(^{191}\) *Iberville's Gulf Journals*, 146.
also may have served as an at least momentarily irrefutable excuse for unhappy guides wishing to get out of undesired travel agreements with Europeans.\textsuperscript{193}

Travelers challenged by uncomfortable demands from their fellows had other options than leaving or refusing to go farther. In some situations, travelers chose instead to confront the issue more directly either through word or deed. In these instances travelers attempted to bring their fellows’ behavior in line with their own travel habits in an array of active and passive ways. Seemingly simple acts like picking a campsite or setting the pace and duration of a day’s travel could be sharply contested. For example, when 1630s Dutch traveler Harmen Mendez Van den Bogaert’s Iroquois guides wanted to conclude a winter day’s travel, they made their intentions known by building “a fire in the woods” signaling that “they would go no farther.” The Dutchman, on the other hand was not satisfied with the distance covered and wanted to continue on despite his guides’ obstinacy. And so he did, but without his native companions. The price for his assertion of will was a night in a cold, abandoned cabin, where he was “not able to start a fire.”\textsuperscript{194}

In a reversal of roles, John Lawson and his English companions traveling through the coastal Carolina swamps in 1700 “had a mind to have rested” but were thwarted by a guide who insisted that “the place we lay at, was not good to hunt in” and so in time the whole party moved on in search of a “more convenient place.”\textsuperscript{195} In this case the guide’s desire to hunt game trumped Lawson’s, the putative employer’s, plans. Likewise, Fray Silvestre Escalante became repeatedly “annoyed” at having to eat the southwestern dust

\textsuperscript{193} For more on alcohol in Indian societies, see Peter Mancall, \textit{Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
\textsuperscript{194} Van den Bogaert, \textit{Journal into Mohawk and Oneida Country}, 20.
of his fleet-footed guides as they traveled through the Four Corners region in 1776.\textsuperscript{196}

Similarly, in June 1793, Alexander Mackenzie was forced to abandon his planned campsite when a native guide insisted that the site was “too cold etc.”\textsuperscript{197}

It was not just when and where to rest that caused flare-ups. The seemingly most natural behaviors could also become the focus of a sudden dispute. Pennsylvania naturalist John Bartram’s 1743 plan to climb a steep Susquehanna Valley hillside rattled the sensibilities of his Nanticoke companions. Once at the hill’s crest, he looked back and saw how difficult his return would be because the hill was “full of great wild stinging nettles.” In order to “make a path” for his “expeditious return,” he took to rolling down “several loose stones” which tumbled down and crushed the worst of the painful shrubs in his way. For Bartram, this course of path-making action made perfect sense. But for his native companions, Bartram’s rock rolling had another meaning and a potentially troubling set of consequences. Such actions “would infallibly produce rain the next day” they told Bartram, who mockingly assured them that it was his “common practice to roll stones down from the top of every steep hill, and could not recollect that it ever rained the next day.” The outcome allowed both the pro- and anti-rock-rolling factions to claim victory for their own beliefs. Indeed there was no rain the following day. But the day after, a morning shower drenched the party. The Indians insisted this was “caused by the stones.” Bartram tried to argue that if indeed there was a connection, why did it take so long for the rain to come? One Nanticoke shrewdly replied that English “almanacks often prognosticated on a day, and yet the rain did not come within two days.”\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{196} Bolton, \textit{Pageant in the Wilderness}, 176.
\textsuperscript{197} Mackenzie, \textit{Journals}, 283.
\textsuperscript{198} Bartram, \textit{Journey to Onondaga}, 82.
At another point in the same trip Bartram and his partner, Pennsylvania Indian diplomatist Conrad Wieser, experienced “great vexation” when a Nanticoke interpreter in their party took a short side trip for the purpose of “picking up” a woman. Despite the Wieser and Bartam’s ideas about how to conduct their trip, this one man was determined to live on the trail by his own rules. The interpreter not only bucked against his companion’s wishes, he even went on to “gratify his private inclinations” with his “occasional wife” in a corner of the room where they all commonly slept. With no doubt some unacknowledged frustration, both sexual and otherwise, in the air, Wieser and Bartram were doubly vexed at the Nanticoke’s intention of bringing this woman along for the rest of the trip, thus adding insult to injury by “shortening” the party’s “already insufficient” provisions.” Despite some Anglo-Teutonic hand-wringing, the unnamed Nanticoke succeeded in traveling on his own terms--and in style--while clearly marking whose rules controlled his travel.

Canadian fur trader Anthony Henday irritated his Cree tent mates when he insisted on discussing at length the many advantages to capturing wolves on the trail to help carry goods along. His companions preferred to get pre-trained dogs from the Archithinues in plenty of time for the return trip and told him as much. But Henday became such a nuisance to his guides both by prattling on about his plan and stopping to try and set traps, that finally one of the men curtly told him “to say no more about it.” The taciturn rebuke was effective enough so as to silence Henday. While Henday’s chatter became an problem for his companions, it was Hendrick Hansen’s silence in 1713 that made his guides feel insufficiently in control of their trip. Hansen persistently refused

199 Ibid., 80-81.
to tell his Mohawk guides the content of the diplomatic message he carried from New York’s colonial rulers to the Onondagas. His companions were “troubled” about the message’s content “lest it may be unwelcome news” and that they in turn should become unwelcome guests as a result. Nevertheless, Hansen refused to divulge all but the smallest amount of information, thereby using his guides’ curiosity as a means to hold them with him for the whole trip.

Not all tussles were as overt as Henday’s rebuking or the willful actions of Bartram and Wieser’s amorous Nanticoke. The first French Jesuits to make the long journey to the Hurons provide a good example of how acquiescing to companions’ travel rules instead of challenging could be an effective individual travel strategy as well as part of a larger colonial agenda. While superficially these priests showed no interest in challenging or manipulating their hosts’ travel habits, their larger plans, and the success of their tactics, did in the long run effect significant changes in how Indians traveled. The Jesuit missions in seventeenth-century New France depended to a large extent on the priests themselves being able to get to their potential converts. Travel with Indian parties, either on the trail or in a canoe, was a regular part of their Christianizing activities. Although it was often hard work, the Jesuits were willing to subject themselves to the canoe rules of their hosts. For their part, Huron paddlers were at first unwilling to let Jesuits into their crafts without considerable control over their conduct.

Paddlers made it clear that priests were to be timely and not keep the party waiting, to take off their heavy leather shoes lest they puncture a canoe’s thin bark skin, and to lift up their heavy black cassocks when getting into a canoe, lest they track in

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cargo-drenching water or knee-scrapping sand. Some priests found that they had to
“paddle continually,” keeping up with the strokes of their seasoned boat mates, and had
to carry as much as any other party member at the portages between waterways. On top of
the unaccustomed physical routine, early Jesuits also had to take care not to alienate any
other party members lest an unkind word or gesture result in their being ditched on shore
or an island to fend for themselves. For Huron paddlers burdened with a peculiar and
sometimes unwelcome guest, it made perfect sense to insist that these odd men in black
function like every other party member. Jesuits accepted this regime because it suited
their long-term goals, and being the best guests they could bought them time to gradually
concentrate on other aspects of native life which they hoped to change. As respect for the
priests and appreciation of the trade goods their presence ensured grew, the rules changed
for black-robed travelers. As early as the 1630s, Jesuits were sitting happily on the floors
of canoes, wearing their shoes the whole way up river and not requested to paddle even a
single stroke.

In time, however, the Jesuit religious agenda did gradually work its way into the
actual mechanics of travel. The same priests who could be such pliable canoe guests
when they needed to be could also be tireless foes of other traditional practices, which for
Indians were as much a part of traveling as was canoeing. When Algonquian hunters, for
example, prepared to indulge in the mass consumption of all that they had killed in what
the French translated as the “eat-all feast,” priests were quick to deride what they saw as
simple gluttony. These condemnations infused an otherwise happy occurrence—a
bountiful hunt—with conflict.

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201 _JR_ 8:79; 9:277; 12:117. See also Axtell, _The Invasion Within_, 71-90.
Converts changing their ways and beliefs could create and augment tensions within travel parties when these changes also affected travel habits. One example is the simple morality tale involving a native travel party made up of Christian Algonquins and pagan Atticamegues. Upon spying two moose, the Atticamegues taunted their Christian fellows, inquiring whether through prayer the Algonquins could ensure a successful kill. The Algonquin leader, a convert named Etienne, replied that “it is he who governs all; we hope in him, and not in our legs or in our drums” and with that ordered all of his party to fall to their knees and call upon God to “dispose the matter as he will.” Meanwhile the Atticamegues immediately set off after one of the two moose, only to return later empty handed “after extreme fatigue.” Etienne’s Christian Algonquins, on the other hand, waited and prayed until “toward the middle of the day” and then set out and soon killed not one but both moose. The poor Atticamegues were allegedly so impressed that they immediately asked to be baptized thus accepting these new trailside habits as part of a larger conversion.

When Sébastien Râle traveled with his early eighteenth-century Abenaki converts, his religious demands went even further toward remolding the mechanics of native travel into a new form. Although the priest’s goal was primarily spiritual control, he also radically altered the actual mechanics of neophyte Abenakis’ travel. Most northeastern Indian travelers, upon coming to a new campsite, set about building shelters and getting things ready for the evening meal. But Râle had his converts first “set up poles at certain intervals, in the form of a chapel.” In winter the first act was to clear the snow for the site of the temporary church. Every night in Râle’s company included a mass over which the

\[^{202}\text{JR 9:271, 273, 277; 41:97.}\]
priest presided from a “smooth cedar board four feet long” which he “always” had them” cut for him. The impromptu chapel’s interior was always bedecked with “most beautiful silk fabric; a mat of rushes colored and well wrought, or perhaps a large bear skin, serves as a carpet.” Râle’s demands represented a considerable, if willingly accepted, departure from the traditional light marching order. All these sundries (poles and planks excepted) had to be carried along and “ready for use” by one time lightly encumbered natives. Râle’s message (intended or not) was that the demands of Christianity necessitated a change in traditional travel practices.

Questions of leadership lurked behind the Jesuits’ travel relationships. By being good canoe passengers, the Jesuits did not challenge the leadership of their Huron hosts. But when it came to matters they perceived as spiritual, the priests were quick to impose their will on their companions and to assert the primacy of their leadership in other matters. Their acquiescing in one part of travel gradually gained them credibility, and even some authority, which enabled them to make a powerful challenge about another aspect of trail life. Similar dynamics were at work in other travel relationships, though not all of them documented.

In some cases, contests over leadership, travel rules, and the course of trailside events played themselves out between the same people over more than one trip. When Samuel Champlain traveled with Huron and Algonquian war parties against the Iroquois between 1609 and 1615, he was not only extending New France’s reach and inadvertently helping to initiate the long war between the French and the Iroquois. He was also a central actor in an on-going process of manipulation and assertion of authority both

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203 JR 24:53.
between himself and his allies, and among the Indians themselves over Champlain’s person. Likewise, when Samuel Hearne and a group of Fort Prince of Wales Home Guard Indians set out to find a mouth of the Coppermine River, hoping it to be a new water route into the Canadian interior, the results of their travel stemmed directly from conflicts over authority and the rules of travel. Retelling the story of Champlain’s participation on these three trips and Hearne’s wanderings on the Canadian Shield with an emphasis on the tensions and conflicts within the parties reveals how Indians and Europeans could squabble over travel’s mechanics and meanings. It also reveals how large events, such as the course of New France’s long and bloody war with the Iroquois or the growth of the western fur traded can be due in part to small personal tensions between individual fellow travelers.

Between 1609 and 1615, Samuel Champlain went on three war parties against the Iroquois in the company of France’s Algonquin, Huron, and Montagnais allies. The first of these, which marked the introduction of firearms into long-standing hostilities involving these tribes, has received the most scholarly attention. Historians have gone back and forth over the long-term significance of Champlain’s fusillade near the future site of Fort Ticonderoga. Some see it as a pivotal moment in New France’s long and often bloody history; others see it as having momentary import but not any long-term consequence. But in elevating or denigrating the import of Champlain’s shot, students

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204 JR 67:217.
of the event have missed the subtle social tensions between Champlain and his Montagnais and Huron allies. Over the course of three trips, Champlain and his allies enacted a prolonged tug-of-war for leadership of the trips and their outcomes. Sometimes Champlain was a direct player, and at other times the tensions were between his native allies—but in all cases his presence and its meaning was at the center of the disputes. These tensions affected the success or failure of each of these trips, which in turn affected the course of New France's larger Indian relations by building alliances with some tribes while increasing tensions with others. Viewed this way, these relatively limited, personal, trail-based conflicts set in motion events that shaped New France's larger history.

In the spring of 1609, the new French presence at Quebec provided the local Indians with an excellent military opportunity. While the fledgling town and its leader Samuel Champlain suffered through a long and scurvy-ridden winter, the local Montagnais built their alliance with the new arrivals. When the winter snows melted, Montagnais guides offered to escort Champlain farther up river and into the lands of the Iroquois. There were rewards for all in this trip: the French would get to see more of the

importance of Champlain's actions include Marcel Trudel, The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 96; Bruce Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron people to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 260-261; Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 42-43; and Matthew Dennis, Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 72-74. James Axtell offers a third explanation for the significance of Champlain's actions. Axtell argues that indeed Champlain did help bring on war between the French and the Iroquois, but not so much through the use of firearms but rather by attaching himself to Indians long at war with the Iroquois. See James Axtell, "Europeans, Indians, and the Age of Discovery in American History Textbooks," in Beyond 1492, 208. Most of these secondary accounts focus on the fallout from the 1609 raid, and only Morison and Jennings analyze the three raids together. None of these
lands surrounding Quebec and the Montagnais would get to strike at their Iroquois foes, aided by their new and impressively well-armed friends, and also gain prestige among their own native allies from having been the band of warriors who led the French on what promised to be a memorable raid.

On the 18th of June the French and Montagnais war/exploration party set out to gain glory, but things quickly went wrong. About seventy-five miles upriver from Quebec, the combined party met a large group of Hurons and their Algonquian friends heading down river towards the French settlement. This group, consisting of nearly three hundred “men skilled in war and full of courage,” planned to visit the French with an eye toward building their own French alliance and holding Champlain to his promise, made ten months earlier, to help them attack the Iroquois.206 Champlain did not seem to have given this issue a second thought to this issue despite its significance to his Indian hosts. Finding the French accompanied by the Montagnais off to conduct a raid earlier promised to themselves could not have sat well with the upcountry party’s leaders Iroquet and Ochasteguin. Nevertheless, the two put on their best diplomatic faces and held cordial meetings with the French leader to figure out the best solution to this unforeseen problem of whose guest Champlain should be. The problem Iroquet and Ochasteguin faced was simple. They had promised their followers that they would have a chance to see the French habitation at Quebec, indulge in a bit of trading, and then participate in a high-

scholars, however, discusses the raid’s internal struggles for control and their effects on the trips themselves and larger Indian relations.

206 Champlain, Works, 2:70.
profile revenge raid against the Mohawks for having violated the terms of a truce.\textsuperscript{207}

Meeting the French and Montagnais already enroute to the Mohawks jeopardized the party's chance to trade at Quebec but, perhaps more importantly, threatened to negate the agreements underlying the large war party and cede the honor of leading the French against the Iroquois to the Montagnais. The leaders offered gifts and expressed their pleasure at seeing that the French were in a martial mood, contrary to mutterings they heard along the way from other Indians. But the promises Iroquet and Ochasteguin made to the party had to be kept in order to secure their leadership over the whole enterprise.

After some consideration, they announced to their followers that all was on as planned—the whole mass of Indians and French would return to Quebec and from there set off once again against the Iroquois.

In demanding and securing a return to Quebec, Iroquet and Ochasteguin made known to all who would be in charge of this raid, while nipping in the bud the Montagnais plans to lead Champlain on their own. The conflict here was between Indians, but it was the presence of Champlain, and the question of who would officially lead him to war, that heightened tensions. By agreeing to Iroquet and Ochasteguin's timetable and travel plans, Champlain inadvertently used his prestige as a man of influence and significance to reinforce the Huron leaders' authority within the mixed group. Iroquet and Ochasteguin's powerplay worked (for a time) in part because it presented little threat to Champlain's understanding of events, leaving him no immediate reason to challenge them and thereby possibly undermine their leadership roles.

\textsuperscript{207} Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 246-250. Trigger emphasizes the desire for trade and the desire to see Quebec as the principal issues behind Iroquet and Ochasteguin's demands.
For his part, Champlain saw himself as building alliances by his participation in a raid and was not troubled by—in fact may have welcomed—the idea that he was a guest of native warlords (although he probably gave no thought to which particular ally they represented). If his would-be allies wanted to return to Quebec, he was more than willing to accommodate them. But it is doubtful that he understood the issues lurking behind the request. The question of leadership of the trip at this stage was between native participants and therefore took place beyond the range of European comprehension and documentation. The French were nevertheless at the center of any native disputes over how the raid should go. It was, after all, a raid predicated on French participation, and the honor of leading such a prominent war party with such illustrious company was a significant prize in and of itself. Even though Europeans were not necessarily battling natives for control over the trip, their very presence raised the stakes and brought new tensions to the surface.

Events after the Quebec visit reveal the depth of some of the party’s dissatisfaction with Iroquet and Ochasteguin’s leadership, and the lack of consensus among the Indians about the purpose of the trip. While heading southward, at the mouth of the Richelieu River—the point of no return for Iroquoia raiders—a “difference of opinion regarding the war” resulted in the departure of a group of Indians who preferred returning home with their trade goods to military glory. If there were other would-be leaders marginalized by Iroquet’s and Ochasteguin’s leadership, Champlain did not note it. If the Montagnais, or other lower St. Lawrence Algonquian allies, were unwilling to risk themselves for the glory of an upcountry allied war captain settling a specific Huron grievance, Champlain did not record it. If there were many in the party who, after seeing
the slow, awkward, and noisy rowing of the French, had second thoughts about the value of their new allies, Champlain did not notice it. Whatever the reason, the "difference of opinion" about the trip's direction weakened the party's strength while further securing Iroquet and Ochasteguin's control over the remaining raiders.

At the mouth of the Richelieu River, Champlain sent his no longer useful shallops back to Quebec along with the majority of his Frenchmen and made the rest of the trip in allied canoes. His physical presence in a canoe—most likely a Huron one due to their numerical superiority after the Richelieu division—reinforced Iroquet and Ochasteguin's leadership by making it clear who would be leading Champlain to the enemy. But although a key member of the raid's retinue, Champlain was far from in charge, and apart from lamenting his host's failure to send out night sentries (the language and comprehensibility of his complaint is unknown), the founder of Quebec seems to have been little more than a talisman in Indian eyes. Along the way, the raiders followed their traditional practices, dividing into three groups to hunt for food, staying ready for ambush, and to scouting the path, and using down time to practice their maneuvers. At night they built walled encampments, and shamans in the party busied themselves trying to divine the upcoming battle's outcome. The Indians also continually questioned Champlain about the content of his dreams, both seeking good omens in their good-luck charm's subconscious, and effectively demonstrating whose rules were controlling the course and interpretive meanings of the raid. The allies were singularly pleased when the Frenchman revealed a dream in which he saw "in a lake near a mountain our enemies, the
Iroquois, drowning before our eyes.” It must have seemed that Champlain was playing by their rules.

Although Champlain made little attempt to challenge his hosts’ travel ways, his involvement in the eventual clash with the Mohawks was both a major departure from traditional ways of war and a confirmation of some of its central ideas. Champlain (and a hidden French arquebuser) abruptly ended what promised to be a long and memorable battle by firing his quadruple-loaded long arm right into the faces of three quizzical Iroquois war leaders. With two headmen dead on the field, a third writhing in mortal agony, billows of sulfurous black powder smoke hanging in the air, and the unfamiliar report of musketry still ringing in their ears, the Mohawk war party turned tail and ran, pursued by overjoyed, trophy-hungry Hurons and Algonquians. Their wars would never be the same again.

Champlain’s musket blast was the Iroquois’s first contact with this unnerving weapon, and no doubt was the most memorable moment in the fight, even if it did cut short the yelling and taunting that was key part of native warfare. But from the point of view of the Frenchman’s native allies, Champlain acted as a bold warrior stepping forward to do single combat with a foe. True, the weaponry was new and the result a staggering, if hurried success, but in terms of action very little had changed. In fact, the joyous response of the allies tells of people who just saw their most cherished ideas reaffirmed, not undermined. Nevertheless, Champlain’s fusillade did present a subtle challenge to Iroquet and Ochasetguin’s leadership by destroying their careful and well-

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208 Champlain, Works 2:95. Dennis, Cultivating a Landscape of Peace, 71. Dennis sees the questioning of Champlain’s dreaming and his subsequent revelation of a fortuitous
practiced plans and focusing attention away from the derring-do and good planning of the
raid's leaders.

There was, however, one moment when Champlain crossed the line from
participant to meddler soon after the raiders set off for home. This occurred when the
victorious returning party took to torturing one of the Iroquois captives. Champlain
refused to participate, despite his hosts having "begged" him "repeatedly to take fire and
do like them." This request made perfect sense in native terms. After all, the
Frenchman had been more than eager to go on the raid, had revealed a fortuitous dream,
and had played a prominent and active role in the fight. It only followed that he would
also participate in the events flowing from the victory. But Champlain refused to indulge
his companions' wishes and somewhat disingenuously claimed that his people "did not
commit such cruelties" but rather preferred to "kill people outright." When the Indians
deprecated the Frenchman's offer to shoot the poor captive as more mercy than the
Mohawk deserved, Champlain sulked off. The allies in turn invited Champlain to fire the
coup de grâce into the Mohawk to end the torture, which he did. From Champlain's
perspective it was his disapproval that led the Indians to ask him to finish off the bloody
and burned warrior. Champlain believed that his "one shot caused [the Mohawk] to
escape all the tortures he would have suffered" and thereby constituted an act of

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210 Ibid., 2:102. See also Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 254. Trigger points out that
many early modern Europeans were not unfamiliar with torture, it being a regular part of
the era's many public executions. Trigger suggests that Champlain may have been
motivated less by a revulsion to the "cruelty" than by a sense that it was wrong to treat a
prisoner of war in such a manner.
mercy. He also believed that his actions effectively ended the ritual, in this instance bringing Indian rituals in line with French (or at least Champlain's) sensibilities.

But the whole incident had very different meanings for the allied Indian celebrants. Most tortures ended when one or another participant—sometimes a warrior, sometimes a grieving villager—stepped forward to kill the victim, often by slitting his throat or cutting off his head. By the time Champlain stepped in to kill the Mohawk, the torture was well advanced and the celebrants had long since moved from mere pain-causing to inflicting deep flesh wounds and burns that were life threatening. Since it was the Indians and not Champlain who selected the timing of the final shot, it may well have been that it was time to conclude the Mohawk's torture and the Indians turned to their new ally to perform the special task. Given the singular role that French firearms played in the raid, the use of the self-same arquebus to finish off a torture victim—the only prisoner tortured by the whole war party (the rest of the dozen or so captives were divided up by tribe)—would have had a fitting poetry to it. Champlain had once again played the central role in a native drama, only this time he was oblivious. The gap in communications and understanding between Champlain and the allied Indians allowed each side to feel that they had controlled the timing and course of this important concluding ritual. This type of reciprocal confusion was part of many travel relationships, but over the next two trips the fog would clear and the struggle for control would emerge as overt attempts to take command.

One immediate result of the 1609 raid was Champlain's agreement to repeat the feat the following year. This time when Champlain met up with his Indian companions at

211 Champlain, Works, 2:103.
Trois Rivieres' spring rendezvous, the Montagnais took steps to assure that their prestigious role as his sole escorts would not be jeopardized by the ambitions of other tribes or warlords. They reminded Champlain that they were “his oldest friends” and on the strength of that precedent they asked the Frenchmen not to travel “in any other canoes than theirs.” Champlain followed their wishes and soon he and the Montagnais joined the Huron and Algonquin warriors who were already skirmishing with a group of Mohawks near the Richelieu River. During the fight, Champlain was more aggressive in asserting his will and attempting to play the role of battlefield commander. He told the Indians to rush the Mohawks’ timber enclosure when the French musketmen ran low on powder. He also urged his allies to fell a large tree into the enemy’s fort. Champlain may have seen himself as an American Marshal of France issuing orders to his men, but no doubt the allied Indians felt that they were acting on good suggestions from a new and prestigious member of their war parties. The general success of the venture covered over any potential rift.

The Richelieu fight of 1610 was nearly as successful as the 1609 venture and there were scalps, prisoners, and martial glory for all. The fact that the Hurons were already engaged in battle made moot the Montagnais power play to keep Champlain in their canoes and thereby improve their own martial standing. In the full flush of victory, all went home happy. The question of control was to become a larger issue five years later when Champlain once again attacked the Iroquois alongside allied Indians led by Iroquet and Ochasteguin in 1615.

212 See Trigger, *Children of Aataentsie*, 71-75.
After a long autumn trip from Huronia, the mostly Huron war party wended its way into Iroquoia. Along the way Champlain made his first attempt at controlling the actions of his companions. Not far from Lake Oneida the warriors captured a small band of Iroquois men, women, and children who had been gathering food. Immediately one of the war party took a captive woman in hand and began to cut off one of her fingers. Champlain promptly denounced the warrior’s actions to Iroquet, protesting that “it was not the deed of a warrior, as he called himself, to behave cruelly towards women who have no other defense but tears.” Champlain knew full well that this type of punishment was routine on native war parties, which makes his attempt at stopping it all the more significant. The Frenchman no doubt believed that his “merciful” intersession concluded the torture of the Mohawk prisoner back in 1609 and probably felt there was every reason to believe that he could once again put an end to a practice (or least its focus on victims) of which he did not approve. But from the native perspective, Champlain’s 1609 actions were part of the Mohawk’s torture and not opposed to it. Then, he had ended a torture when it suited the Indians—now he was stepping in far too early and his demands and threats to leave the party if they were not heeded must have seemed odd and out of place.

In response, Iroquet simply explained that “their enemies treated them in like fashion” but he did offer a compromise to keep Champlain happy. From then on the warriors would turn their ministrations only on male prisoners. The compromise seems to have settled the issue—but not the underlying tug-of-war to control the trip’s outcome. Iroquet and his warriors planned a traditional raid on what was most likely an Oneida

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214 Ibid., 3:64.
They planned on using surprise to catch the Iroquois unawares and then draw them out from their walls into open combat, complete with name-calling, trophy-taking, and bold demonstrations of martial spirit—the same type of buildup cut short in 1609 by Champlain’s musket blast. Champlain quickly envisioned another type of fight and also imagined that the respect shown him by allied warriors translated into meaningful European-style on-field command authority. The two visions collided immediately, and the result was a failure in the eyes of both the French and the Indians.

Just as the allies began to lure the Oneida warriors out from their well-built, pallisaded enclosure, Champlain and his men opened fire with their arquebuses and drove the Oneidas back in. This allowed Iroquois archers and stone-throwers to take pot shots at the unprotected Hurons from the relative safety of their walls. Champlain claimed to be so annoyed at what he saw as a lack of discipline that he upbraided whomever would listen, fuming that “if everything went according to their caprice and under the guidance of their councils, evil alone could result.”

Having misunderstood the Hurons’ desire to pull the Oneidas out of their fort, not lock them in, Champlain compounded his error by demanding that the army settle in for a European-style siege, including the construction and use of an elevated platform from which his arquebusers could shoot down into the fortified town. Champlain’s wooden “cavelier” allowed his musketmen to kill many Oneidas at their own doorsteps, but it did very little to satisfy the allied warriors’ desires for good fights and trophies. In fact, the Iroquois themselves were a bit mystified at this.

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216 There has been some debate about whether the fort in question was Oneida, Onondaga, or of another Iroquois nation. Trigger makes a compelling argument for it having been an Oneida town. See Trigger, Children of Aataentsic, 311.
type of war and later even turned French participation to their rhetorical advantage by shouting that the Hurons "had little courage" as shown by their need to "call [the French] in to assist them."²¹⁸

This insult must have had extra sting, considering how much the controlling machinations of Champlain stymied the type of open fight that his allies most wanted. But Champlain suffered his own sting in the form of a painful debilitating arrow wound in his knee. In the end, when anticipated reinforcements failed to show up, the Hurons retired, carrying their wounded "doubled up and bound." They also "carried for several days" Champlain whom they painfully, and infantalizingly, tied up for the trip so that he was as immobile as a "little child in its swaddling clothes."²¹⁹

Champlain mistakenly believed, and conveyed in his record of the event, that the 1609 invitation to kill the tortured Mohawk constituted a sort of capitulation by his travel companions. He also misinterpreted his talismanic status on the raids and gradually came to see himself as an acknowledged battlefield commander and therefore a, if not the, central leader of the trip. He built on both of these misperceptions and ultimately became a thorn in his allies’ side, interfering with torture for no good reason and pushing a battle in an odd and unproductive new direction. That he made suggestions as to how to conduct a trip or a fight would have made sense to the Indians; after all, Champlain was clearly an important figure and was more than welcome to chime in on war plans. Even his independent battlefield actions made sense in the context of Indian warfare. What must have been most vexing however, was his increasing anger at not being obeyed and, at the Oneida fort, his actively working against the war party’s desire to force the

²¹⁸ Champlain, Works 3:77.
Iroquois into an open fight. His anger must have been all the more perplexing as, in
native eyes, he had (quite unbeknownst to himself) been playing by Indian rules all along.

Champlain’s behavior on these three raids in many ways foreshadowed that of the
Jesuit priests who would soon follow him in native canoes. Like the Jesuits, Champlain
was initially content to not interfere with the mechanics of travel while also being quick
to assert his will on matters which most interested him. By trying to take control of the
course some trail-side events and their companions’ behavior these Frenchmen created a
basis for their own claims of leadership, or at least special influence. But by not asserting
themselves over questions of destination and party make up, the door was left open for
men like Iroquet and Ochasteguin to feel confident in their own leadership. By focusing
on, and prioritizing different aspects of travel, Indian and European travel partners
created a gap in understanding that allowed competing people to believe themselves to be in charge. This gap also contributed to the frequent misunderstandings that allowed travel partners to come out of common experiences with very different ideas about what had transpired, why things had gone as they did, and who had been in charge.

Champlain’s demand that his Huron companions not torture Iroquois women was
based on the European assumption that women were essentially defenseless, thereby
introducing differing gender conceptions into his bid to control or modify the behavior of his allies. A similar gap in understandings about the nature of women, coupled with an ill-advised attempt to limit female participation in a winter trip, played a significant role in the failure of Samuel Hearne’s second attempt to reach the Coppermine River in 1770.

219 Champlain, Works, 3:77-78.
As Hearne and the Hudson’s Bay Company operatives at Fort Prince of Wales made the arrangements for Hearne’s escorted trip, they chose to exclude any women from the trip so as to “avoid all incumberances as much as possible” and that the party’s native hunters “might have fewer to provide for.” Toward that end Hearne also took steps to assure that no other Europeans would be on the trip implicitly suggesting that both women (in the English vision) and European men were nothing but burdens on the trail. The decision not to include women on the second Coppermine trip was a curious one.

Hearne was a newcomer to the world of tundra travel and, despite having made one failed trip on the barren lands still he largely applied his imported conceptions of femininity to native women. But the man behind the trip, Governor Moses Norton, was not only familiar with the important role women played in native travel but was himself alleged to be the son of a Cree woman and the post’s former governor Richard Norton. Hearne even noted in a later textual aside that Norton knew fully well that the party “could not do well without [female] assistance,” since they were vital for hauling baggage as well as “dressing skins for clothing,” pitching tents, gathering kindling, and other seemingly menial tasks. Why then did the two plan the trip without women? The answer may have to do with the very nature of the trip. Unlike most hunting or hauling

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220 Hearne, Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort (1911), 70.
221 Hearne is the main source for this rumor, but there is reasonable evidence to cast doubt on this story. See Silvia Van Kirk, “Moses Norton,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 5:583-585.
222 Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean (London: A. Strahan and T. Caldwell, 1795), 12. Gordon Speck asserts that Hearne himself argued in favor of bringing women but it was Norton who killed the proposal. Speck would seem to be offering Hearne the most flattering possible read of the explorer’s argumentative footnote. Gordon Speck, Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage, 126. See also Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 15-27.
parties, this one was to be specifically a scientific exploration. For Hearne and Norton, women may have been fine on routine trips rooted in commerce, or for all-native parties, but the implicitly manly nature of exploration made this trip exceptional. The expedition’s key pieces of scientific apparatus (like its quadrant), marked the trip as an exclusively male environment. This represented a significant power play for control over the behavior and values of the expedition’s mostly Indian members. It also doomed the trip by crippling the party’s ability to fend for themselves before they even set foot outside Fort Prince of Wales.

Food soon became a major concern and the small party devoted as much time to killing fish and geese as it did to traveling. After nearly two months fending for themselves, the men spied an encampment of a large group of Indians whom they soon discovered were mostly the wives and families of Chipewyan hunters who had gone down to Fort Prince of Wales to hunt geese. After joining these people in a deer hunt and passing some time with them, Hearne’s principal guide began to act strangely. He began pitching his tent backward and forward, from place to place” as he decided what his course of action should be. When Hearne questioned him, he learned that the man believed “that the year was far too advanced” to allow for safe travel to the Coppermine River that year. The guide seemed to be deciding whether to pitch his tent with the Chipewyans or stay with Hearne as he had agreed to. But he managed to persuade the Englishman that the best course of action was to “pass the winter with some of the Indians then in company” and try again in the spring. Hearne “could not pretend to contradict him,” and agreed to this sensible plan.223

223 Hearne, Journey from Prince of Wale’s Fort (1911), 90.
The planned lack of women denied the expedition the chance of making the Coppermine River by undermining its ability to feed itself. Yet when things looked bleakest the guides did score a victory—they found the needed women and persuaded Hearne to take up with them. The good news was that they could at least travel in a familiar and efficient manner. The bad news was that lacking goods to trade for necessities such as food and functional clothing, they were at the mercy of their hosts, who were not eager to take care of a group of men foolish enough to have created their own disastrous plight and led by a "poor servant, noways like the Governor at the factory."224 Hearne and his increasingly distant guides spent the next several days "reduced to the necessity of depending on" their "inconsiderate" hosts "for support."225 Nevertheless, Hearne was determined to continue on his scientific pursuit by gaining what geographic knowledge he could of the lands he traversed—a retention of his manly scientific goal in the midst of his demeaning and emasculating dependency on native handouts.

The centerpiece of his travel kit was his quadrant. It was the quadrant that turned the trip into a scientific venture, and given the male-female opposition established at Fort Prince of Wales, the quadrant was a talisman symbolizing a singularly European form of manhood while also being a symbol of controlling both geography and travel. But the quadrant was also a heavy piece of equipment made more burdensome by the addition of a tripod and other surveying and distance-measuring tools.226 While at the center of

224 Ibid., 93.
225 Ibid., 93-94.
226 There is no record of how Hearne’s companions viewed this piece of brass apparatus, but there are clues from other travels. When William Bartram was busy surveying Buffalo Lick, Georgia, in 1772, he ran into some trouble from local Indians. An unnamed
Hearne’s vision of the trip, the quadrant was more peripheral to his Indian companions. One of the company made his view of the whole endeavor as clear as he could by simply walking off with a recently-met group of Indians and taking the quadrant and the party’s small cache of powder with him. By the time Hearne realized what had happened, it was too late in the day to chase down this “deserter.” But the next day after some searching, they found the “quadrant and the bag of powder lying on the top of a high stone.” The bag was missing some of its vital contents but the quadrant was unharmed. But not for long. The whole enterprise finally collapsed a few days later when a “sudden gust of wind” blew it to the ground and dashed to bits both the quadrant and Hearne’s final hope of turning the poorly planned trip to some benefit.

From Hearne’s perspective, his trip ended when the quadrant’s fragile parts smashed on the Barren Ground’s rocks. But he had long since lost the support of his native companions who preferred travel with the Chipewyans to following Hearne’s scientific quest. The guides took control of their time as did many other Indians: they left when the situation grew too grim. Hearne was also quick to blame the “misconduct” of his increasingly truculent guides for the trip’s utter failure. But when he was busy planning his next attempt, this time heavily aided by the Chipewyan fur captain Matonnabbee, the headman voiced a native version of why the trip had failed. “Women” chief approached the party and told the surveyor that his compass had run the line incorrectly and that the “wicked instrument was a liar.” Indians like this defiant chief knew all-too-well that surveying was a prelude to colonial usurpation of their lands. The “wicked instrument” had put a grid on the land before and the chief was none-too-happy about the prospect of further encroachments. The Indians of Canada’s northern shield would not have the same associations with surveying and measuring tools, living as they did on land too barren for European agricultural settlements. Nevertheless, the quadrant and the misguided planning of its operator could not have been favorites of Hearne’s companions. Bartram, Travels and Other Writings, 56-57.
Matonnabbee told Hearne, “were made for labour” and that there was “no such thing as travelling any considerable distance, or any length of time, in this country, without their assistance.”

Matonnabbee agreed that having uncooperative guides had indeed undermined Hearne’s plans, but in the final analysis in native eyes, it was the lack of women “that occasioned all [the party’s] wants.” There was significant gap between Hearne’s English view and Matonnabbee’s Chipewyan view. For Matonabbee, the trip failed due to poor planning. But in Hearne’s view, gender dominated. It was the loss of the manly scientific apparatus, and the unmanly behavior of his unfaithful guides, that finished off the trip, not the planned absence of female “incumberances.”

Hearne’s next trip, planned in conjunction with Matonabbee, included women, and for this and other reasons, succeeded in reaching its goal.

Whether in brief flare ups or sustained over long-term, long-distance dramas, Indian and European travel companions did what they could to see that their ways, beliefs, and ideas held sway. For some Indians this entailed walking away from an uncomfortable situation. The excuses for, and methods of leaving may have varied circumstantially, but this simple act of what Europeans invariably saw as “failure” was a profound, and usually quite successful way for Indians to maintain control over their own time on the trail. Europeans often did not have the choice of slipping away at night or refusing to go any farther. But being pliant about some travel rules created the opportunity to be more assertive about others. The Jesuit priests in New France were masters at this sort of travel calculus. Some conflicts were small-scale and momentary

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227 Hearne, Journey from Prince of Wale’s Fort (1795), 55.
while others could take on more epic proportions. The many ways in which Hearne and Champlain understood their supposed authority over their Indian companions and tried to act on that authority reveal far apart fellow travelers could be. These long-term conflicts show that the consequences of conflict and misunderstanding could be quite dramatic. In ways both small and large, the underlying tensions over whose habits and plans should reign, whose vision of a trip would determine its shape and outcome, and whose leadership was most authoritative, were all significant components of many colonial-era Indian and European travel relationships.

\(^{228}\) Ibid., 55.
CHAPTER FOUR
RATTLESNAKES

In June 1764 a group of Ojibwa Indians en route to Fort Niagara unexpectedly encountered their grandfather. This meeting provided an opportunity to seek the grandfather’s aid and advice in their travels. Certainly it was a dangerous time. War had replaced France’s open hand with Britain’s tight fist and people like the Ojibwas, who had become wealthy and influential playing one European power off the other, found themselves weakened, hungry, and angry. Some Great Lakes Indians—including many Ojibwas—went to war against the stingy English, but the result was more death and more danger. Indian tribes and alliances divided and reformed themselves in new ways and war’s shadow darkened the landscape. Leaving home to trade and build new alliances was risky; whatever message or advice the grandfather offered the travelers would be welcome.

One by one each of the party’s members took deep drafts on their tobacco pipes and then blew smoke offerings to the grandfather, who received them with apparent calm and satisfaction. After a full half hour of these quiet and respectful devotions, the travelers began to ask for favors. They first asked the grandfather to safeguard the families they had left behind at Sault Sainte Marie. They then asked that he “be pleased to open the heart” of Sir William Johnson, the English Superintendent of Indian Affairs, ensuring that he would be generous and “fill their canoe with rum” at the end of their
journey. The grandfather’s “visible good humor” was a tonic to the Indians, who now traveled along waterways so recently engulfed in international conflict. The good fortune and potential meaning of the encounter so occupied the travelers that they would talk of little else over the next few days.229

Before the grandfather left them to return to the woods, one of the party’s leaders took care to implore the powerful being to overlook the insulting actions of their white fur trader companion, Alexander Henry. It was Henry who first found the grandfather while gathering wood for an evening’s fire. After nearly stepping on the grandfather, Henry ran back to the beached canoes as fast as his naked legs could carry him to fetch his gun. The Indians, busy building their night’s lodgings, saw Henry rummaging through the lightly-packed canoes and had the good sense to ask him what he was up to. Were they not able to intercede and stop Henry he would have gone back into the woods and shot the grandfather to death. A powerful force—the Manitou Kinibic—would have been angered, a fortuitous opportunity lost, a sign not heeded, a risky trip made potentially more dangerous.230

It was confusion, not bloodlust, that lay at the heart of Henry’s murderous intentions. What the Ojibwas respectfully called Grandfather, Henry saw only as a dangerous hissing rattlesnake. When Henry unwittingly put his bare foot down “not more than two feet” from the coiled snake, he reacted with the fear and horror that typified

229 Alexander Henry, Travels in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776, ed. James Bain (Toronto: George N. Morang, 1901), 176. For more on the Southern Ojibwas’ participation in Pontiac’s Rebellion, see White, The Middle Ground, 269-314; Peter Schmalz, The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 63-77.
European travelers’ reactions to these alarming and dangerous reptiles. Indians, on the other hand, reacted to a chance trailside encounter with a rattlesnake in a variety of ways, ranging from deep respect to bold daring. Travelers encountered a host of perils while on the trail, and roaring rapids, poor weather and short provisions were all common enough problems. But travelers’ reactions to one particular peril—rattlesnakes—provide a unique glimpse into the mindsets and experiences of Indian and European travel companions. There may have been more common occurrences, but few are as well documented, or were suffused with different meanings than were rattlesnake encounters. Because Snake encounters were memorable moments for many travelers these encounters generated a documentary record far richer than that of other perils. But the literature of snake encounters (rattlers and other varieties as well) is not without interpretive difficulties. Such stories made good copy, and many travel writers made use of these sensational moments. It is not surprising that many of these tales bear an uncanny resemblance to one another and suggest the development of a specific sub-genre of travelers’ tale.

Nevertheless, a close examination of how Indian and European travel companions reacted to the snakes themselves, and to each other’s reactions reveals how tensions between travelers took shape and how snake-related ideas, meanings, and practices affected each other.

The success of a trip, the health of the travelers, and even their spiritual well-being was often closely connected to how one dealt with the snake in the path. But Indians and Europeans had different—even diametrically opposed—visions of what

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constituted the best, safest, and most efficient way to deal with snake encounters. Travelers’ different responses to snakes highlighted their different approaches to travel and the world in which travel took place. Exploring the beliefs travelers brought to these snake encounters and the roles that these beasts played in European and Indian societies lays the ground work for seeing how these ideas interacted on the trail.

For most Europeans the snake’s popular image was fairly well fixed. From the Garden of Eden’s notorious enticing serpent, to map-adorning ship-devouring sea beasts, to the polluting and transforming snakes of the Malleus Maleficarum, snakes have usually been maligned in Western thought.\(^{231}\) Snakes were dangerous creatures noted for their stealth and tinged with demonic slyness and malice. Medieval Europeans feared that a snake might sneak into a sleeper’s open mouth and eat away the victim’s insides. They dreaded the tiny, red-eyed serpent that could kill at a glance, and they venerated the bold deeds of serpent killers whose courage was made greater by the belief that a snake’s poison could climb up a spear or lance and thereby do in the would-be slayer.\(^{232}\) Snakes’ reputations were so bad that sometimes even simple contact with one could bring on an accusation of witchcraft. In 1607—the same year as the founding of Jamestown and Santa Fe—a Kentish woman found herself in court accused of having had her neighbors kneel and worship a dead snake. She defended herself by claiming that all she did was point out the curiosity near her home. The court was worried about the use of a black arts-tinged folk belief, holding that “if one see[s] a dead snake in the beginning of the


year he shall overcome his enemies." A snake's power to kill or to implicate made them dangerous indeed.

Europeans generally viewed America's many snakes through the lens of Old World fear and belief. Few of North America's manifold "horrors" could turn a European traveler as white with fear as the sight of snake slithering across the path, or worse even, the sound of a rattler's menacing clatter emanating from some undetermined but unnervingly close, covering. The rattlesnake in particular held a special terror for Europeans. No such snakes lived in Europe, while America must have seemed to be almost literally crawling with the rattlesnakes' many varieties. Poisonous snakes were not new to Europeans, but one that exhibited such large fangs accompanied by a loud and unmistakable rattling was a wholly new terror. The rattlesnake so captured Europeans' fevered imaginations that they no doubt identified no small number of other only half-seen serpents as rattlers, thereby unfairly enlargening this particular specie's fearsome reputation.

Early European observers went to great lengths to describe the powers and attributes of this new and especially fearsome viper. Dutch traveler Johannes Megapolensis wrote in 1644 of sharp-toothed brutes who would "dare to bite at dogs" and would "make way for neither man nor beast, but fall on and bite them." The Dutch divine seemed as alarmed at the snakes' particular impudence as he did by their poisonous and "commonly even deadly" bite. In 1656 the Jesuit priest Jean Du Quen listed the rattlesnake as one of the Saguenay region's marvels. The length and sharpness

of the snakes’ teeth and the speed with which their poison could kill a person captured the
blackrobe’s imagination. But it was the rattler’s unique sound that most occupied him.
Du Quen mistakenly believed that the snakes made their sound as they moved along the
ground, but noted that the sound was audible at “twenty paces.” For Du Quen the
sound held a special purpose. He proposed that God himself had given the snake its
sound so that “men may be on their guard at the approach of so dangerous an animal.”
In Du Quen’s zoology such menacing creatures wandered the world equipped with their
own natural leper bells to alert the unwary of their approach. John Josselyn thought New
England’s rattlesnakes—the “ captain” of all the region’s reptiles—made their sound with
“nothing but a hollow shelly business jointed.” If the snake’s sound did not impress
Josselyn, one specimen’s ability to swallow “a live chicken, as big as the one they give 4
pence four in England,” certainly did. French Sulpician and explorer René de Bréhant
de Galinée described the rattle’s sound as being a “noise like that which a number of
melon or squash seeds would make, if shut up in a box.” But it was the snake’s cold-
blooded boldness that really impressed Galinée. He noted that the rattler was “not timid
like other serpents.” Rather than darting for cover and avoiding human contact, these
intrepid monsters commonly coiled themselves up in a “posture of defense” and then

234 J. F. Jameson ed., Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664, Original Narratives of
235 JR 43:155.
236 JR 43:155
82.
would “wait for a man.” Other travelers claimed that the rattlesnake generally avoided a confrontation until provoked by a misplaced foot or hoof. But the price of such a misstep was frightening.

The fear of a dangerous encounter was often strong enough to warrant travel delay. Naturalist, traveler, and author of a treatise on rattlesnakes Peter Kalm dared not climb over path-blocking logs which were “the chief retreat of rattlesnakes during the intense heat of the day.” Similarly, John Ettwien and fellows cautiously approached a portion of a Susquehanna-side trail where “rattlesnakes seemed to hold undisputed sway.” Despite their best attempt to make it past the lair unscathed, a well placed bite on the nose of one party’s horses ended up killing the animal and thus deprived the travelers of a needed pack carrier. In 1745, along another portion of the Susquehanna, a small party of Moravian missionaries took time out to hunt down a varmint whose telltale rattle had spooked Bishop Spangenberg.

As if avoiding a potential hiding spot or dodging a rattler’s extended fangs were not stressful enough, many European colonists still held to the older folk wisdom that the mere sight of one of these serpents could cause harm. At a Niagara River portage the

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240 Peter Kalm’s *Travels*, 362.
otherwise stalwart seventeenth-century French Canadian explorer La Salle, reportedly succumbed to fever “at the sight of three large rattlesnakes” sitting directly in his path. Of course, La Salle had been feeling poorly after a brief hunting side trip, but few of his travel companions would have doubted that the snakes played some role in his illness.243

In a similar vein Pierre de Charlevoix was no doubt glad that his 1721 travels did not take him onto a group of islands called the “Rattlesnake Islands” because the place was so “infested “ with them that some claimed that “the air is infected with them.”244

In the face of such terrifyingly dangerous creatures, European travelers generally had one response: they killed them, and preferably as quickly as possible. Certainly when Bishop Spangenberg called back to his brother Moravians and Indian guides to come up and kill the heard-but-not-seen rattler, a terror-colored caution was his principal motivation. But not all European snake killers showed such fear. One English writer noted that colonial militias “carr[ied] on a war with the snakes” and made killing them a regular part of their activities.245 For a group of Frenchmen on their way to colonize Florida, a 1562 Dominica water stop turned into a snake-killing spree. The soldiers chased two hissing serpents of “exceeding bigness” (in this case no rattlesnakes) and then slashed them to death with their swords. During the resulting commotion some of the party slinked off to pick the local “ananas” fruit—a direct violation of the rules dictated by the local headman. The serpent of Genesis enticed Eve to taste the forbidden fruit; the serpents of Dominica created the diversion that allowed the curious French to trample

243 Kellogg, Early Narratives of the Northwest, 189.
and plunder off-limits Indian gardens. One Martine Chaveau paid the price for the violation; his colleagues found him so badly wounded by Indian arrows that they left him behind to die.\textsuperscript{246}

The methodical nature of European snake killing suggests the degree to which these herpecides saw their actions as a form of public service—especially for travelers. Killing snakes served to decrease the animals' overall number and make the trail a safer place. Travelers facing a two-way trip knew that they could potentially run into the same snakes on the return. A dead snake that could not harm one's own party also protected others who might travel that way. Peter Kalm noted that colonists would seek out rattler's dens in the springtime when the animals ended their hibernation. As the animals came out of the ground the ready colonials quickly dispatched them. One "old Swede" told Kalm that he had killed as many as sixteen of them "with one shot" as the still-sluggish snakes relaxed and warmed themselves in the sun's rays.\textsuperscript{247} In the fall of 1733 William Byrd II and his companions killed two "fat" rattlesnakes along the Virginia-Carolina border. Although the snakes' rattles were objects of some interest to the men, none of them really felt the desire to bring the "two very large" specimens back to camp to eat them.\textsuperscript{248} Instead they just left them to rot. Their reason for the killing was simply to rid the trail of dangers. Similarly, John Ettwien and party devoted some time to killing the snakes they encountered "at all points" along their Susquehanna trail, and Richard Blome summarily killed both of the rattlesnakes he met in his late seventeenth-century Pennsylvania

\textsuperscript{246} Quinn \textit{New American World}, 2:320. \\
The preventative component of snake killing was especially pronounced when one ran across snakes near one’s lodgings, as John Josselyn did in 1639. Josselyn killed off “above four score” of the brutes who had the temerity to come “within a stones throw” of his rustic New England home. One Virginia planter surprised a rattlesnake who rewarded him with a deep and painful bite. In his fear, pain, and rage, he killed the offending beast and then returned home, threw the dead snake on the floor, and told his no-doubt-shocked family “I am killed, and there is my murderer!” The planter’s emotional mix effectively expressed the terror and hatred that drove many European snake killers.

Snake killing provided travelers the therapeutic opportunity to take action against one of the many perils they faced while traveling. Many trail risks were simply unavoidable—storms, enemy ambushes, swollen rivers, and dangerous paths were just part of travel, and the only way to avoid them was to stay home. But snakes were vulnerable. One could not avoid the possibility of an encounter and even the risk of death at the fangs of a secreted rattling monster. But a traveler could fight back in a way that one could not fight the rain or a rock fall. Killing a snake—or a large number of them—provided the chance to master one element of a strange and often dangerous environment. Furthermore, snake killing fit into a larger pattern of exterminating animals Europeans saw as dangerous or otherwise undesirable. Colonial wolf bounties, collective squirrel kills, and 5,480 mole corpses (which the residents of Prestbury, Cheshire proudly and

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meticulously counted in 1732) all testify to the degree to which the Europeans' perfected environment relied on animal slaughter.\textsuperscript{252} Unlike squirrels, moles, and sparrows which, to their cost, wandered into European towns and farmsteads, snakes tended to stay in the woods, making their wholesale extermination impractical. The snakes' longstanding association with evil and their woods habitat combined in travelers' minds. Fear of the dark unfamiliarity of American woodlands and dread of a waiting serpent swirled together, the one augmenting and validating fear of the other. As John Smith claimed, folks returning to England complained that "the country is all woods" and some cited fear "the danger of the rattell Snake."\textsuperscript{253} Given this combination of fears and beliefs, it is not surprising that so many of the early European travelers who took the time to offer detailed descriptions of snakes were clergymen.

Acting out against snakes did not always require killing. In some cases, just interfering with a snake's evil plans gave satisfaction. Louis Hennepin reported seeing a

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\textsuperscript{251} Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, \textit{Natural History of Birds, Fish, Insects, and Reptiles} (London, H. D. Symonds, 1808), 5:101. The planter survived his bite, but not without a few days of sweating, extreme pain, and high fever.


\end{footnotesize}
snake “about six feet long crawling up a straight and precipitous mountain”\textsuperscript{254} in order to steal some vulnerable chicks from a hapless swallow’s nest. Feathers and debris from previous successful raids littered the ground at the foot of the hill. Hennepin and his companions took it upon themselves to intercede and pelted the snake with stones until it lost its purchase and fell. In a similar incident in 1788, Samuel Kirkland and his New York state traveling companions saw a large snake slowly making its way up a tree to eat the young birds in a nest. Kirkland described the snake’s actions in language better suited to a theatrical production than a woodland feeding incident. The snake reached the cavity in the tree which sheltered the nest and then “raised her head in a lofty manner and looked in upon the little harmless and helpless creatures.”\textsuperscript{255} In this little drama Kirkland and company cast themselves as the heroes and promptly chopped down the tree and killed the villain. Fur trader John Long encountered a large snake while traveling up the St Lawrence River in 1781. The snake had a fish in its mouth, so Long took his rifle and with a single “fortunate” shot managed to “release the prisoner from the jaws of death.”\textsuperscript{256} Many of these tales take similar shape and indeed may have been informing one another as travelers recast their memories in a solidifying literary style. Nevertheless, they do reflect the fascination and horror Europeans felt towards snakes in general and rattlesnakes in particular. A long European tradition of fear and distrust of snakes informed these actions and their subsequent retelling. By thwarting a snake’s plans, the do-good traveler struck a small blow against evil in all of its many forms.

\textsuperscript{254} Louis Hennepin, \textit{A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America} (London: M. Bentley, 1698; reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982), 244.

\textsuperscript{255} Walter Pilkington, ed., \textit{The Journals of Samuel Kirkland, Eighteenth-Century Missionary to the Iroquois} (Clinton, N.Y.: Hamilton College, 1980), 141.
In the eighteenth-century, the language of science and the stance of the curious observer began to shape Europeans’ travel descriptions. But the naturalist’s response to snakes differed little from the clergyman’s. Killing a beast was still the best way to interact with one. Naturalists were less motivated by a biblical vision of snakes than clergymen, but this did not decrease the number of animals killed. Killing a snaked provided naturalists (or a traveler adopting the stance of the naturalist) with the opportunity for a close examination of the creature. Although William Bartram preferred to see himself as above the brutality so many colonists showed toward snakes, he nevertheless killed and interfered with his fair share of the beasts.\(^{257}\) William Byrd and his companions paid special attention their dead trophy’s rattles. Mark Catesby and William Bartram both painted fine portraits of rattlers based on dead specimens. Catesby was so taken with the rattler that he devoted more text to this type of snake in his writings than all others combined.\(^{258}\) Peter Kalm, who saw rattlesnakes first hand during his American travels, wrote a full treatise on the topic claiming that “the flame in [a rattlesnake’s] eyes, particularly when irritated and killed no painter can imitate.”\(^{259}\)

Observers offered dozens of conflicting and overlapping anecdotes and made authoritative pronouncements about the snakes’ habits and customs. Some claimed them to be fast, aggressive, and vicious, while others thought them slow and passive. Some

\(^{257}\) Thomas Slaughter, *The Natures of John and William Bartram* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 142-47. Slaughter argues that Bartram used his writings to create a self that was less brutal than other travelers. Bartram’s letters tell more of his snake killings.  
\(^{259}\) Kalm, “Medical and Chirurgical Cases,” 284.
claimed that the number of rattles told a snake’s age, while others denied the assertion.\textsuperscript{260} Naturally enough, the snake’s mouth was always a source of nervous attention. Jonathan Carver offered a detailed description of a rattler’s teeth and “small bag full of venom” which could only have been based on close examination of a dead specimen.\textsuperscript{261} What is more, Carver went so far as to bait snakes by waving a “rag fastened at the end of a stick” in their faces just to see how the angered animal would attempt to bite at it.\textsuperscript{262} Experiments like these provided a chance to watch these snakes in action. In the early 1720s one curious South Carolinian killed upwards of five dogs and one bull frog by placing them before a tied and fired up rattler in order to study the snake’s bite.\textsuperscript{263} Similar observers took a keen interest in the rattlesnake’s body and functioning and wrote several detailed studies of dissected animals. Although these experimenters might have been a bit bolder than those who swooned at the mere sight of a large snake, they still believed that the best snakes were dead and distant.

European travelers sought to avoid snakes at all costs and generally killed them in the event of an sudden encounter; Indian travelers saw snakes very differently and

\textsuperscript{260} Laurence Klauber, Rattlesnakes: Their Habits, Life Histories, and Influence on Mankind, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) 2:1116-1244. Klauber has pulled together a wonderful compendium of ethnographic information about Indians and rattlesnakes. Klauber’s principal interests were the habits and varieties of rattlesnakes. His use of ethnographic and historical sources was principally to debunk what he saw as outdated superstitions or to juxtapose modern herpetological fact with supposed quaint old beliefs. In vol 1:5 he specifically denies that one can tell a given snake’s age by the number of its rattles. Most rattlers grow a new rattle each year, but they are fragile and tend to break off if they get too long.


\textsuperscript{262} Journals of Jonathan Carver, 63.


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consequently viewed their encounters with the animals differently. Like Europeans, Indians saw rattlers as dangerous animals and did not relish an surprise run in. But unlike Europeans, Indians generally conceptualized the danger differently and consequently arrived at different solutions to an otherwise similar problem. Snakes held a greater range of possible meanings for Indians than for their European traveling companions. Snakes were part of a world in which spirits, dead relations, distant ancestors, and god-like beings moved between the seen and unseen worlds. In that world all animals required respect if one were to live harmoniously with them and, in the case of game, if one hoped to catch more in the future. A given snake could be an incarnation or representation of an animal spirit bearing a specific encoded message, a powerful force holding the keys to a trip’s success or failure, or a lost friend or family member bearing news or advice. As Alexander Henry discovered, an encounter with a snake could require special actions, rituals, and extensive discussion in order to be fully comprehended and effectively used. Unlike Europeans, for whom the snake’s image was more or less always negative, Indians had no fixed moral valuation of these animals. Different snakes meant different things to different people in different times and places, but rattlesnakes often had a special role in Indian life and thought. Many peoples prohibited killing rattlers in any circumstances, while others contented themselves with rituals of respect while on occasion killing the animals. Travelers encountered snakes more often than did stay-at-homes and the consequences of mistreating a snake were particularly dangerous for travelers. The meanings and stories Indians applied to snakes were so complex, varied, and at odds with how most Europeans saw them that few if any European travelers ever
fully grasped how their Indian companions saw snakes and the central role that their proper treatment played in travel.

Henry’s Ojibwa companions called their rattlesnake “grandfather,” not referring not so much to a narrow parental relationship but rather using the term as one of respect alluding to distant kinship. Snakes were the animal ancestor of many Indian clans, and European travelers found that relationship celebrated in the form of serpent images gracing the front of Iroquoian longhouses and elaborately carved snakes guarding the remains of the Natchez dead. Snakes could also be closer kin however. A Huron named Isonnaat suffering through the epidemics of the 1630s left his town of Anouatea to seek out his half-sister who “had been changed into a serpent.” He may have been seeking his half sister’s aid for his very ill daughter. In a similar incident a Piankashaw Indian flew into rage when a French soldier killed the snake living in the man’s Illinois country home. The man told the Frenchman that the snake had been his manitou and the soul of his father who had died a year earlier, “shortly after having shot two snakes which were mating on a rock.”

Snakes adorned the bodies of Indians, both in and out of legend. The Iroquois central story—the Deganawidah epic—tells of Atatarho, a powerful sorcerer driven mad by his rage and hatred for mankind. A knot of hissing serpents in place of hair was the physical manifestation of his insanity. During his 1756 Arkansas travels, Jean-Bernard Bossu met a well-traveled Osage man who had made his reputation by killing an enormous snake. A large tattoo of the snake on the man’s body memorialized the bold

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266 Bossu’s Travels, 111.
act, and the snake subsequently became his village's chief manitou. The snake's killing and subsequent tattoo may also have been a commemoration of a spiritual journey during which the man saw a snake as his animal benefactor and guardian. Some Virginia Algonquians took the snake-as-ornament idea one step further by wearing a live snake through a pierced ear with the snake, "lapping himself about his neck oftentimes familiarly he suffers to kisse his lipps."

A snake’s body was often a useful and lucky object. Snake skins made fine offerings to Gods, a snake found in a bear’s or similarly brave animal’s stomach was seen as the source of its courage and became a powerful totem, and some Indians reportedly employed a defanged snake tied around the neck as a protective talisman in war. Shamans employed snakes’ powers and bodies in healing and religious rituals. Some cures required that the attending shaman take venomous snakes in hand while ministering to an infirm patient. In some cases a specially defanged snake wrapped around a patient’s torso could also cure the illness. In one early eighteenth-century North Carolina case, an Indian healer cured a reluctant Englishman’s “distemper” by wrapping a rattler around the planter’s belly. By morning the illness had transferred to the now-dead snake and the planter was well on the way to full recovery. Pueblo Indian shamans practiced a form of snake handling that included the markedly sexual imagery of

priests putting serpents in their mouths and rubbing them on their genitals.274 A Missouri Indian woman shaman carried a large living rattlesnake coiled around her body as friend, advisor, and a kind of live chain of office. French observers were both shocked and incredulous when she seemed to be able converse with the beast and even to sense its emotions. At one point she said to the animal, “I see [that] you are bored here. Go home and I shall meet you there when I return.”275 The snake then took its leave.

Snake images could sometimes have as much power as the genuine article and parts of snakes themselves also had considerable power. An ill Huron had a brother who dreamed that a serpent-shaped stick could heal the disease. The ill man’s friends and family immediately set about making the dream real.276 Pictures of snakes painted or tattooed on the body could in some cases ward off a dangerous snake bite.277 While rituals involving live snakes or effigies were usually the purview of trained specialists, snake parts had many curative powers that common folk could put to their own use. Snake parts were key ingredients in ointments and balms for curing a variety of conditions, and a rattler’s teeth made fine devices for administering medicine or for

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273 Ibid., 227.
275 Bossu’s Traveless, 111.
276 JR 14:167.
277 James R. Masterson, “Colonial Rattlesnake Lore, 1714,” Zoologica, 23:9 (1938): 214. Masterson also claimed that some Europeans also carried snake images on their bodies. While this suggests, and indeed Masterson asserts, that these people accepted the Indian vision of these as protective marking, it is very hard to know what exactly the images meant to European bearers. Alexander Henry bore a tattoo that he received as part of Ojibwa adoption. For Henry the symbol was mostly one showing his daring and skill as a trader and in no way made him prepossessed to see snakes as his adoptive kin did.
pricking the skin. A rattlesnake’s tail could cure a tooth ache, and biting a green snake around its body could prevent future tooth pains. Indian women knew that snake blood could ease labor pains as could eating a powdered rattle. Some even asserted that simply shaking a rattlesnake’s tail could make childbirth less painful. Cherokee healers used an oil made from the rattlesnake’s lower body to soothe sore joints. A rattlesnake’s fat could ease bruises, sprains, and swollen limbs, although for some peoples a specialist had to ritualistically render the fat.

For Indians, powerful spirits in the form of animals or objects were not divided into fixed good and evil forces like the Europeans’ God-Satan dichotomy. Spiritual power could work for wither good or ill; it was up to the user to maintain the best possible relationship with it. But even a careful following of rituals and ceremonies could not guarantee that autonomous power-possessing forces would not cause harm for their own obscure reasons. Furthermore, just as a skillful shaman could implore, cajole, or manipulate spirits to act in a supplicant’s interest, people could also employ these forces for ill. As new and seemingly uncontrollable diseases swept through their towns some Hurons became suspicious that the illness may have been the work of their resident French priests employing snakes in some new and unfamiliar way. This fear was plausible enough that some Indians thought priest-owned artistic renderings of the terrors of hell were in fact pictures of the very serpents which the Jesuits used to “poison” the people. For one Canadian Indian, snake images in a chapel tapestry were fearful

278 JR 12:15; Lawson, New Voyage to Carolina, 49.
280 Lindholt, John Josselyn, Colonial Traveler, 82; Klauber, Rattlesnakes, 2:1196.
281 JR 19:97; 14:103.
enough to send him fleeing to his kin, warning them that the priests had “exposed the souls on figures of serpents and snakes” and urging them not to go into the church building “for it is all surrounded with robes and garments of demons.”\textsuperscript{282} Snake power in the wrong hands was indeed something to fear.

Snakes appeared in Indian stories explaining the world and how it worked and occasionally played the central role in rituals for keeping the world in balance. Some of these reptiles were essentially the same as the ones Indians encountered daily. For example, the Tobacco Nation Indians of the Erie Peninsula told of a god figure named Onditachiae who would come to earth to get a supply of snakes to feed upon.\textsuperscript{283} The Hurons connected snakes with celestial activity. They informed Father Paul Le Jeune that thunder was the sound of a god—perhaps Onditachiae—vomiting up snakes he had swallowed. Lightning was the god-eaten snakes as they flew to earth. This belief was well grounded in empirical observation. The Indians told of finding the remains of the celestial snakes in the ground at the feet of lightning-struck trees. Such objects are on display in many modern natural science museums bearing the rather dry explanation that they are fulgurites, which are heat-fused soil minerals resulting from lighting strikes.\textsuperscript{284} The Pueblo Indians had their own version of the snake-sky connection, as revealed in their Snake Dance for ensuring rains. Pueblo Indians portrayed the god of water as a snake and kept special snakes specifically for the ritual. The dance was the purview of the Rain Chiefs who would handle the snakes and use them in seemingly sexually-suggestive

\textsuperscript{282} JR 31:247.  
\textsuperscript{283} JR 10:195.  
ways, which did not fail to catch European eyes. Pueblo thought and ritual blended snakes with rain and water and the renewing forces they together unleashed. Cherokee Indians also saw a connection between the rain and snakes. They knew to take care and ensure that a freshly killed rattlesnake’s body was securely hidden in the ground or in a log; otherwise the other snakes, angry over this lack of respect, would send so much rain that the streams and rivers would flood.

The Indians’ world also contained snakes whose sizes, attributes, and powers transcended the abilities of their more quotidian cousins. These marvelous snakes were often the ancient progenitors of the snake tribe whose contemporary descendants threatened Indian travel plans and general well being. Indians told a variety of stories about enormous snakes with unusual physical attributes and unnerving powers. In the Ojibwa Midewiwin medicine society, members practiced cures once learned from a giant serpent. For New England Algonquians a large horned serpent of considerable power lived under the water and land. This beast, which they portrayed in stone and on amulet, was often paired with its celestial analog and inveterate foe, the thunderbird. The Dakotas told Jonathan Carver of an enormous beast which they knew as Tautongo Omlishco—the Buffalo Snake. This large creature mixed a variety of physical traits—it reportedly had a snake’s body of nearly eighteen feet in length, four feet with bear-like

285 Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came, 30.
286 Mooney, Myths of the Cherokee, 296.
claws, and a ridge of fins running down its red back. Seneca travelers knew of a small lake inhabited by a snake of indeterminate size which had the terrifying ability to shoot “balls of liquid fire” out of its eyes. Huron Indians described a kind of scaled snake called Onniont which had the power to pierce “everything that it meets in its way.” Cherokee Indians told stories of a large man-turned-snake called Uktena “the Keen-Eyed.” Uktena was as thick as a tree trunk and had horns like the northern Horned Serpent. Like the Senecas’ snake, Uktena and its descendants lived in deep pools, but were also known to haunt lonely mountain passes. Uktena had the ability to dazzle its prey or an enemy with a flash of light from later a large glittering stone in its forehead. The Cherokees claimed that this light could hypnotize and cause an unfortunate victim to run towards Uktena when the better choice would have been to run away. The jewel in the snake’s crown was a source of considerable power for those who had the courage and good fortune to possess one. Healers used these objects in medical rituals and for general good luck. Cherokee Indians told trader James Adair of one local healer who had an Uktena stone “near as big as an egg” which he found “where a great rattlesnake lay dead.” European traders attempting to purchase one of these stones met with strong resistance from Indians who feared that losing the stone would “prejudice their health or affairs.”

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289 Journals of Jonathan Carver, 98.
290 Kirkland’s Journals, 141.
291 JR 33:211.
293 Adair’s History, 92.
294 Timberlake, Memoirs, 74.
Unsurprisingly, Indians also saw snakes as potentially dangerous animals, regardless of their larger spiritual connections. Indian travelers needed an array of skills and knowledge to get by in the woods and knowing how to protect against and cure snake bites had life-saving importance. Travelers were in a singular bind vis-a-vis the snakes: they were more likely than stay-at-homes to have snake encounters, and travelers’ remoteness from home, family, and healers augmented the danger from a snake bite. But simultaneously, the rituals needed to keep on the reptiles’ good side frequently required close contact with a snake. Angered snakes might bite a person in revenge for improperly following the appropriate rituals, killing a snake rashly, or showing disrespect toward other members of the snake tribe. Rattlesnakes possessed a form of collective consciousness so that offending one rattler meant offending them all. Similarly, rattlers enforced collective responsibility for humans who may have angered the snakes: the misdeeds of one human could be revenged on any human. Consequently, vulnerable travelers might have to pay the price for the sins of many others.

Given snakes’ special association with water and the weather, an offended snake might revenge itself by a sudden and dangerous turn in the weather. As with bites, travelers were at special risk since they could easily fall victim to an unexpected storm while on the water, or might become isolated on a blocked trail by a swollen river or stream. Angered snake spirits could also avenge themselves in any number of creative ways, ranging from accidents to illness. But most often rattlers took revenge with their fangs. Therefore Indian travelers had to pay special care to avoid offending snakes while simultaneously being prepared to handle the almost unavoidable snake bite.
Indian snakebite cures fell into two broad categories: those that one could perform on one’s self, and those that had to be administered by an expert healer. Native travelers relied heavily on transportable cures and were masters of a variety of herbal and surgical remedies. One way to protect against snake bites was to treat the animals with due respect by making offerings to special sites and to the animals themselves. But the means of doing so often called for close contact with the dangerous beasts; therefore snake bite was always a possibility and even the most respectful traveler could still find him or herself bitten by an angered snake.

When a bite occurred, Indian travelers practiced an early form of triage. Deep bites that hit major veins were far more dangerous than lighter bites or bites in artery-free muscular parts. The deepest bites were beyond the healing reach of herbal cures and required surgical procedures, such as cutting the wound and sucking out the poison. When a young Indian boy traveling with Pierre Espirit Radisson found himself badly bitten, he immediately took out his knife and cut off the entire affected area before the poison could spread too far. 295 If done quickly and properly, this draconian surgical practice could remove the poison before it moved too far into the blood stream. Of course, such a cure was not only disfiguring, but also ran the risk of opening up a vein in a way that could cause severe blood loss or lead to a dangerous infection. Radisson did not record whether the procedure worked. When presented with this dilemma, many an Indian traveler simply recognized that his or her race was run and, refusing treatment of any kind, just waited to die.

295 Catesby, The Natural History, 2:41; Explorations of Radisson, 92.
But most Indian travelers relied on special roots and herbs to protect themselves against snake poisons. These herbal cures could be effective against light bites and were consequently a standard part of a traveler's kit. Snake-root, whose English name suggests its principal use, grew throughout the North American woodlands and was well known to many Indian people under many different names. "Snake root" may in fact have been a catch-all name for many types of herbs and plants with curative powers; surveyor and naturalist John Lawson noted the existence of at least four healing roots in North Carolina alone, while Mark Catesby listed at least three.\(^{296}\) Plants including golden rod, dittany, and devil's bit all reportedly had curative powers.\(^{297}\) Eastern Algonquians had a reddish root called "pocoon" which had protective qualities and when rubbed on a traveler's body could either repel a snake or neutralize the effect of its venom.\(^{298}\) Southeastern Indians knew to chew on a piece of "Senecka" root to allay the effects of a bad bite.\(^{299}\) Some Indians asserted that simply carrying a piece of the right stuff in a pouch or neck bag could provide enough protection to allow the bearer to sleep under a tree without fear of a nocturnal bite—a fear that kept some European travelers far from deep sleep.\(^{300}\)

Curative roots and herbs made into "decoctions" or boiled into a tea could serve as a preventative drink or be consumed after a bite. Chewing the root or applying it mashed to a fresh bite could effect an almost miraculous cure. One impressed English traveler had high praise for his native companions' "thorough and speedy cure" which called for the victim's chewing of the proper root and swallowing the resulting saliva, After he had

\(^{296}\) Lawson, New Voyage to Carolina, 134; Catesby, Natural History, 2: 41.
\(^{297}\) "Letter from Dr. Kearsley to Mr. P. Coullinson; dated Philadelphia, Nov. 18, 1735," Gentleman's Magazine, 36 (1766), 74.
\(^{299}\) Adair's History, 247; Rountree, Powhatan Indians of Virginia, 128.
swallowed enough, he then applied the chewed root to the wound itself. The combination of antidote and poison caused a "terrible conflict throughout the body," but in the end the poison was "repelled through the same channels it entered and the patient was cured." Proof over time demonstrated the effectiveness of these cures and, confident in their ability to stop a poisonous bite, Indians approached snakes with respect but not the outright terror exhibited by European travelers.

Experienced Indian travelers knew how to placate snakes with offerings and kind words, but to be sure they also took care to avoid places that held special risk, such as islands or ponds inhabited by snakes, snake spirits, or giant serpents. Failure to so do held grave potential consequences since angered or wronged snakes might be avenged by the bites of their fellow snakes. Most travelers carried their own stashes of snake root or some similar herb so that a supply would be on hand should the need arise. Confidence in one's ability to heal a bite melded with the need to act respectfully towards snakes. After all, fear of a bite would make it difficult to approach a snake and show the proper respect while making offerings. The bodily security that cures offered made possible the kind of physical closeness that enabled the larger spiritual benefits to be gained through offerings.

When European and Indian fellow travelers encountered a snake on the path, these different ways of interacting with the reptiles came into conflict. The two courses of action, the one based on cautious interaction, the other preferring distance or even killing, were entirely incompatible and necessitated a choice. Indians' ways of coping with snakes were based on cosmologies that saw the world's animals, objects, people, and

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300 Von Graffenried, _Account of the Founding of New Bern_, 378.
places as all alive and all tied together in varied ways. Knowing how to placate a snake was one of many travel skills, that while informed by a larger world-view, were nevertheless employed as simply as one would employ any other technology or labor saver. Indians paddling a canoe, building a fire, or setting a snare all had time-honored, localized methods, and dealing with a snake was no different. The connection between mistreating a snake (or any other powerful force) and the resulting disaster on the trail was as real as the connection between improperly tarring a canoe and later seeing it take on water. Like every other aspect of travel, the Indian way to deal with snakes was proper, efficient, and time-tested.

Europeans were quick to recognize the efficacy of Indian travel methods, especially when those methods involved recognizable skills which Europeans themselves could master and use. Travelers all over the continent had high praise for Indians’ abilities to steer a canoe, find food in the woods, and build ingenious shelters from local materials. Within a short period, European traders and missionaries whose designs depended on backwoods’ skills became competent woodsmen in the Indian mold. European travelers adopted the use of herbal cures and in some cases carried the root with them just as Indians did. Nicholas Cresswell learned of snake root not from an Indian but from an experienced English traveler, and Father Marquette himself taught his fellow Jesuit travelers in the use of the protective roots. William Byrd saw the “strong

301 Adair’s History, 248.
antidote" as essential travel equipment, and one English rattlesnake scholar claimed that English traders “know this root and keep it always about them.”

But while adopting Indian curing techniques, Europeans generally failed to see Indian methods of snake placating as a useful corollary. Different world views and centuries of snake fear and hatred made this nearly impossible. Utility in European eyes ended with the root itself. Europeans quickly adopted Indians’ herbal cures and preventatives, but they did not adopt the idealized relationship with snakes that went with cures in native practice. In appropriating Indian herbal cures, Europeans recontextualized the cure itself. For Indians, the cure for the bite and the veneration of the biting snake were tied. The ability to cure gave one the ability to make close contact with an being of considerable power. An encounter with a snake was a moment ripe with potential, and native travelers wanted to be in the best position to understand the meaning behind the meeting. Doing so was a necessary part of traveling because of the dangerous ramifications of angering or not heeding a snake. Confidence in one’s ability to cure or protect against a bite was a sine qua non of being able to make close and respectful contact with a dangerous animal. Therefore snake bite cures were an intrinsic part of showing snakes proper respect and being a good and successful traveler. But for Europeans, native herbal cures became a last-ditch defense against animals that were better avoided or killed.

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303 Practice adoption has been widely studied. Older work usually held to narrow models of acculturation and enculturation whereby adoption is analyzed as a step towards loss of cultural identity. More recent work has gone in the opposite direction and posited that adoption, absorption, and appropriation are complex strategies with many possible
European travelers (at least those who recorded their experiences) were able to use and appreciate Indians' ability to cure snakebites but could not or would not share in the larger native vision of snakes and the uses of the cure. Therefore dealing with snakes became a simmering impasse in the travel relationship. Most Indian travelers held onto their traditional ways of dealing with snakes throughout the colonial era. These methods worked and were proven to protect travelers who followed them. For their part Europeans were confident that their method was the best way to rid the trail of a malicious danger. For them as well as for Indian travelers, failure to take proper action was risky. Problems naturally arose when these two different and incompatible visions of how to handle a snake came to bear on the same animal, with consequences for all members of a party.

James Adair learned this lesson. During one of his mid-eighteenth-century travels, a Chickasaw chief companion chewed a piece of snake root, blew the protective spittle over his hands, and picked up a rattlesnake they had encountered. The Chickasaw feared that Adair would do something foolish to harm the animal, so he removed it from danger by placing it gingerly in a hollow tree. Although Adair did not hear the message, the actions of the Chickasaw were simultaneously a rebuke to Adair, a loving act towards a powerful animal, and a convincing demonstration of the right way to handle such encounters. Adair did not heed the lesson and another snake paid the price. On another trip sometime before 1745 on the Chickasaw trade road, one of Adair's native

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companions covered himself in snake root and sat down to remove the herb-smeared fangs of a rattlesnake. Like this bold soul, some Indians took it upon themselves to defang snakes in order to keep them as pets or leave them in places slightly less dangerous. One stunned observer wrote that his Indian companions had made the rattlesnakes so tame “as to carry them in their bosoms” and have them “come and go as they bid.” While it is impossible to tell for sure, it is most likely that these pets were of the de-fanged variety.

After Adair’s Indian companion had carefully pulled the snake’s fangs from its sockets, he then set the animal on the ground “tenderly at a distance.” Adair’s response to the scene was to kill the snake forthwith. His rationalization for this act was that now that the animal had no more fangs, “common pity should induce one to put it out of its misery.” But the old Indian saw it differently and he made his anger and objections known to Adair warning that such a disrespectful action would “occasion misfortunes” for both of them. Indian travelers knew that such snakes required and deserved respect and that to impiously kill one would result in bad luck in hunting, war, and travel. The problem for this Indian man was that his fate was now mixed up with Adair’s. The rash and unthinking actions of the one held potential danger for the other. The old trader and Adair continued their acquaintance, bickering about the right ways to travel in the woods until the Indian’s death in 1745 on the Old Chickasaw path. Indian travelers hoped to control their fellows’ actions lest their mistakes hurt everyone.

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305 Journals of Jonathan Carver, 82.
306 Adair’s History, 251.
307 Ibid., 251.
308 Journals of Jonathan Carver, 82.
Knowing how to handle a snake could also provide the opportunity to take advantage of generally less snake-sawy European companions. During a mid-eighteenth-century trip, an unnamed Menominie Indian left his rattlesnake grandfather at a Fox River portage with the intention of picking him back up on the return trip. A Frenchman named Pinneshon traveling with the party thought the whole proposal ridiculous and made his skepticism known. In response the Menominie offered a small wager, claiming that within eight days of their spring return to the same spot he would call and retrieve the snake, which would enter the box the Menominie carried him in “of his own accord.”

When all this came to pass, as the Indian was confident it would, Pinneshon would owe him several gallons of rum. Pinneshon agreed, saying that the Indian “would never see [the snake] anymore.” The following spring the snake did not return to his box within the agreed upon eight days. A no-doubt happy Pinneshon agreed to double-or-nothing the bet and gave the snake four more days to enter his box. On the last allotted day the snake arrived and calmly entered its box, just as the Menominie claimed he would. Pinneshon was out a considerable amount of rum. Luck? Perhaps. What is more likely is that the Indian had mastered the snake’s migration pattern and had trained the animal to winter in the box rather than in a den. Certainly experience had shown the Menominie Indian that a snake well-treated was a reliable friend and good ally. It is also possible that the Indian originally understated the number of days he expected before the snake’s return and thereby set a sly trap for his French travel partner. Whether or not the Menominie employed such shrewd planning, he was able to profit by pitting his

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309 Ibid., 83.
310 Ibid.
understanding, knowledge, and familiarity with rattlesnakes and their migratory patterns against the confident ignorance of his companion.

The Menominie knew his rattlesnakes. But the snakes he and other Indians knew could be very different from those known by European travelers. For Indians, the powers of the great legendary serpents like the Cherokee Uktena, and their children or fellow snake tribe members—the snakes on the trail—could overlap and merge, a logical occurrence considering the close relationship Indians saw between the great and small beasts. When John Lederer killed a rattlesnake in the Virginia woods in 1669, he was astonished to see a whole squirrel in the snake’s belly and wondered how a creature as slow moving as the snake could catch one so fleet footed. His three Chickahominy companions explained that the snakes climbed to the tops of the trees and by “fixing their eye steadfastly” upon a small victim, the “horror” of the gaze “strikes such an affrightment into the little beast, that he had no power to hinder himself from tumbling into the jaws of his enemy.” Similarly, Carolina traveler John Lawson learned from his Indian companions that rattlesnakes have the ability to “charm” animals so that they “run directly into their mouths.” Lawson claimed to have witnessed just such an incident. Although he did not claim to be a living witness, Mark Catesby also offered anecdotal evidence of the charming snake, claiming that birds and squirrels would “skip from spray to spray hovering and approaching gradually nearer their enemy.” The seemingly unnerved creatures’ fates finally came when they lighted into the snake’s open mouth.


312 Lawson, New Voyage to Carolina, 134.
While Catesby did not reveal where he learned of this hunting technique, it sounds very much like a version of the native story.\textsuperscript{313}

When discussing these snakes with European traveling companions (often across a deep language chasm), Indian informants explained the behavior of individual snakes with reference to the behavior of legendary beasts like the Uktena, which had the ability to freeze its prey in their tracks. For these Indians the distinction between the habits of legendary beasts and the snake in hand was unclear, if it existed at all. The creatures were all tied together and the Indians themselves were also connected to them. Understanding this interconnected corpus of belief—and knowing how to act on it properly—was an important part of being a good traveler. Whether a given snake captured a given squirrel by stealth or by charming mattered less than the lessons and connections the moment presented. When Lederer asked about the dead and flayed rattlesnake before him, it made perfect sense to his travel companions to offer him a lesson about the world of snakes writ large. Their explanations carried with them a slight rebuke for the perhaps unwise killing of a rattlesnake. Adair’s companions, perhaps aided by an ability to speak the same language, told Adair that it was unwise to kill a rattlesnake. Lederer’s companions, speaking an unknown Indian language in translation to an English colonist of German birth, chose to relate native natural history with an implicit lesson. From the Indian vantage point, had Lederer been better aware of the rattlesnake’s cosmological connections he might have shown greater respect for the animal. By cluing their travel

\textsuperscript{313} Catesby, \textit{Natural History}, 2:41; Peter Kalm’s \textit{Travels}, 293 contains the same story.
companion into the powers of snakes, they in part may have hoped to make him a better traveler by helping him see why these animals demanded respect rather than violence.314

Lederer himself reacted with incredulity towards his companions’ explanation, preferring to believe that snakes climb trees to “surprise their prey in the nest.”315 So did French officer Pierre-Joseph Celeron when he heard “a thousand marvelous things” about rattlesnakes from the Indians accompanying him into the Ohio Country. Peter Kalm believed in snakes’ powers of fascination and William Bartram recounted the fascinating allegations but chose to avoid confirming or denying them.316 John Lawson, on the other hand, gave the snake’s charming abilities credence. For many Europeans who accepted and retold the stories, these beliefs jibed well with traditional European snake lore and a general willingness to believe the worst about these beasts and served as an allegorical vehicle for expressing Europeans’ anxieties about the American woodlands.317

315 Lederer, Discoveries, 15.
316 JR 69:167; Slaughter, The Natures of John and William Bartram, 153. Slaughter claims that while William Bartram restated the belief, he related it as a story told to him by others and avoided confirming or denying it. Benjamin Smith Barton, A Memoir Concerning the Fascinating Faculty Which has Been Ascribed to the Rattle-Snake, and other American Serpents (Philadelphia, 1796) uses Bartram’s travels in its attack on the belief in the snakes’ hypnotic powers. See, Slaughter 150-54; Irmischer, “Rattlesnakes and the Power of Enchantment,” 10.
317 For a detailed discussion of this question and the minds of naturalists, see Irmischer, “Rattlesnakes and the Power of Enchantment.” Irmischer’s primary concern in the role of charming as a literary aspect of naturalists’ writings into the nineteenth-century. He does not discuss the Indian connection and instead sees the origins of charming stories in Pliny’s Historia Naturalis (10). Pliny no doubt had some influence, but these stories native origins are more immediate. For more on the Bartrams, snakes, and fascination, see Slaughter, The Natures of John and William Bartram, ch. 6. Slaughter argues that John Bartram stood apart from the mass of snake killers by using his Quakerism as an argument against killing the reptiles.
Naturalists and interested physicians debated the question of the snakes' ability to charm its prey in book, medical report, and popular publication with partisans both supporting and denying the allegation. Modern herpetologists deny that rattlesnakes hunt in this fashion, but the number of Europeans who accepted the Indian explanation suggests the degree to which European travelers relied on and related the testimony of native informants or recycled native lore. Europeans during the colonial era increasingly divided the natural world from the world of traditional myths and origin stories. European travelers, particularly those with a naturalist bent, wanted to know about the habits of these snakes on what they saw as a strictly material plane. For them, acquisition of this type of knowledge was itself an important goal of their travel. Understanding the snakes and their habits enabled better prediction of where and when one would encounter a snake. This predictability made the snakes less dangerous. Like Indians, Europeans saw knowledge of snakes as a necessary part of travel. But the difference was twofold. First, Europeans preferred a knowledge that they saw as being free from what they deemed myth. Indian knowledge, as revealed by men like Adair's and Lederer's companions, was an intimate part of an integrated cosmology. The second difference was that an important goal of the Europeans' studies was to render the snakes harmless by demystifying their behavior and making their actions predictable and thereby avoidable. Killing snakes was an implicit part of the acquisition of this knowledge. Indians, on the other hand, used their knowledge to better understand the snake as a meaningful part of trail life.

Understanding a snake's message was vital to successful travel. The Ojibwas traveling with Henry saw their meeting with the grandfather as exactly the kind of meaning-laden encounter that required using an experienced traveler's full acumen. Such
snakes, they told the fur trader, rarely traveled so far north, therefore the snake had gone out its way to convey a message to the travelers. The grandfather had come to tell the Ojibwas not to proceed on this dangerous trip. This was not good news for Henry. As a Montreal-based English trader he of course thought it was vital that the trip continue as planned. His livelihood and personal safety, and the success of the ascendant English fur trade, depended on his and his colleagues’ ability to keep Indian trade partners connected, hunting, and coming to English trade posts. Therefore, Henry made the case for continuing as forcefully as he could. The Indians had a choice; listen to the meaning of the grandfather’s visit and turn back, or heed Henry’s promises and forge ahead. Small wonder that the meaning of the meeting dominated their conversation.

They chose to continue as planned but soon came to regret the choice. While in the midst of a time-saving detour across open water, the party was swept up in sudden storm. Immediately the Ojibwas’ thoughts turned to the grandfather. They called out to him to spare them and offered him more tobacco. But the storm did not cease and so the party turned to the other traditional Ojibwa sacrifice to placate the water gods and other angry forces. The leaders of the party tied up the legs of their dogs and threw the squirming animals into the water, hoping that the Manitou Kinibic would “satisfy his hunger” with the bodies of the bound hounds. When the wind refused to die down, it became clear that the Manitou had not forgiven Henry’s insulting behavior. One of the principal Ojibwas called out to the angered god and begged him not to harm the Indians.

for the sake of Henry's foolish blunder. After all, Henry was "absolutely an Englishman, and of kin neither to him nor to them." 319

For the Ojibwas, Henry's European-style method of dealing with snakes had yielded dangerous consequences. Henry may have been able to paddle a canoe well, live on travel rations with little complaint, wear the same light and easy attire of his Indian companions, and even speak their language. But his inability or unwillingness to relate to the world around them in safest and most appropriate manner made him a liability. In renouncing their connection to this inconvenient party member the Ojibwa leader took up the rhetoric of the contemporary nativist prophets and put it to good use.

During the dark war years of the 1750s and 1760s nativist messages of spiritual revival and renewal blazed through Indian communities west of the English Atlantic settlements. 320 Like other tribes, the Ojibwas of Sault Sainte Marie heard the messages of Indians' separation from the Whites and spiritual revival and in varying degrees took them to heart and acted on them. When the Indians made their offering to the snake, they also asked him to stay in their country and "not return among the English." 321 This last request perhaps hints that these people were feeling a little uneasy about their new English alliance. By labeling Henry "absolutely an Englishman," the Ojibwa headman seems to have alluded to an innate and unconquerable differences between Indians and Whites as preached by many nativists. But these prophets also decried the consumption of the alcohol these Ojibwas clearly hoped to get at the end of their trip. It is impossible

319 Henry, Travels in Canada, 178.
to know whether the members of the party were themselves nativists, however conflicted, or whether they were perhaps divided over this highly charged issue of the day. But by using the logic of nativism, this Ojibwa leader found a creative solution to a thorny problem.

The argument that Henry was indeed not part of the group—not part of the grandfather’s or the Indians’ family—suggested that the protocols governing snake encounters could apply unevenly to members of a travel party. The Ojibwa headman essentially reversed the unified vision he acted on when he earlier asked the grandfather to overlook Henry’s disrespect. At that moment, the same snake protocols applied to every member of the party. But the crisis-driven water-bound renunciation of Henry as kin—quite a step considering that other Ojibwas recognized Henry as an adopted kinsman—effectively recognized that there could be more than one way to approach a snake and that the ramifications could fall on party members differently. This was a marked departure from the anxiety exhibited by James Adair’s snake-protecting companions and a form of accommodation that held the potential to allow Indians to live their lives as they chose in a universe they could still control despite white interference.

If Henry’s Ojibwa companion was willing to envision a way of travel that included different snake protocols, some Indians went so far as to adopt aspects of European preferences. A few European travelers reported instances of their native fellow travelers killing rattlesnakes in ways that were quite at odds with the care and deliberation shown by most Indians. In his 1752 rattlesnake essay, Peter Kalm claimed

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that some Indians of his experience had begun to kill the animals as did Europeans. Kalm’s observation may serve in part to explain the actions of a group of French-allied Algonquians and Senecas traveling with Francois Picquet and party on the great Niagara Portage path in July 1751. The party encountered a “throng of rattlesnakes” in a pit near the road. It was too late in the season for the snakes to have been in a winter den but these may have been hiding together to avoid the day’s heat. Whereas the Ojibwas traveling with Alexander Henry in the same area saw their encounter as a fortuitous meeting, the Indians with Picquet saw these snakes as providing the opportunity for some good sport. The young men in the party “even though many bare-legged” quickly jumped into the throng and began to kill the snakes as fast as they could. The combined din of shouting “animated” Indians and fiercely hissing rattlers terrified the Frenchmen. By the time the dust settled, the score was Indians forty-two, snakes zero; the snakes did not even manage to land a single bite.

There had always been Indians who killed snakes. But the actions of these young men seem out of kilter with the attitudes of other contemporary and proximitous native travelers. There are many possible explanations for this uncharacteristic bout of Indian snake killing. The French-allied natives may have been acting to please or protect their French companions, they may have acted on an obscure and undocumented protocol missed by Europeans, or perhaps Piquet in his fear misidentified the snakes as rattlers

rather than some other snake not deserving of the same respect. Certainly the profligate killing by these young men better resembles the work of Kalm's "Old Swede" and other European herpecides than it does the respect of Adair's and Henry's Indian companions. Superficially, it supports Kalm's assertion that some Indians had adopted the European stance towards rattlesnakes.

Recognizing that Indian Christianity took many varied and often unpredictable syncretic forms, a Christian Indian would theoretically have broken with the cosmology that informed the traditional respectful attitude toward these snakes. If one accepted the orthodox Christian vision of the universe, then snakes could not be grandfathers or other kin, they could not be powerful manitous or messengers from other planes. Instead, they would be simply animals put on earth for man's use and as vulnerable as any other. Seen in the light of religious conversion, the snake killing may have been the act of Indians who shared a view of the cosmos with their French companions. But this is not to say that these eager snake killers may have adopted the Europeans' longstanding fear of snakes. In fact, the glee and mirth with which these Indians jumped into the snake pit contrasts sharply with Picquet and his cowering companions. These Indians may have wanted to kill the snakes, but they did so showing the same lack of fear that reverential Indian snake handlers exhibited while employing the same body of snake knowledge. Their skillful ducking and dodging, and the unevenness of the conflict's death tally, demonstrate that while these men may have been snake killers in the European fashion, they did so in an Indian way and with Indian familiarity with the beasts.

Rattlesnake killing served as an opportunity to show off to friends both native and French. Like the Osage man tattooed with his prize snake, these young men may have
sought to prove their bravery in combat with a respected and worthy foe. The confidence of their actions and the close nature of their combat differ dramatically from the European snake killers’ tension and distance. There were Europeans who took great manly pride in snake killing; Dr. Alexander Hamilton claimed that his having killed a rattlesnake entitled him to a colonel’s commission because it was custom that “a man has no right to that dignity until he has killed a rattlesnake.”\(^{323}\) But even the snake murders of William Byrd—a man singularly concerned with manliness of the good traveler—did not involve jumping into a pit of snakes to kill them by hand. Even while killing rattlesnakes in the European fashion, Indian travelers employed a native sensibility and demonstrated the superiority of natives’ snake knowledge.

Both Indian and European travelers approached snakes in ways that accorded with their overall understanding of the beasts, their powers and habits, and the world and cosmos in which they acted. Both groups saw their own methods of coping with snakes as the best way to ensure safe and healthy travel for themselves and for other travelers. But like many aspects of the colonial encounter, these differing methods came into conflict when only one of the two visions could prevail in a given situation. Travel partners borrowed and appropriated aspects of each other’s snake handling methods, but this borrowing fell short of creating a truly hybridized style of snake interaction. Instead, Europeans used Indian snake bite cures, but separated them from the larger body of belief from which they derived. Similarly, some Indians took up snake killing, but did so with a confidence and fearlessness that defied the original European reasons for killing the beasts in the first place. For some Indians, like the Ojibwa headman traveling with

\(^{323}\) Alexander Hamilton, 1744, quoted in Mathews, “Rattlesnake Colonel,” 344.
Alexander Henry, a snake encounter provided the opportunity to explore the possibility of a world divided—a world in which one set of rules applied to some travelers and a different set to another group. In all of these cases, fellow travelers clashed over their differences, but also learned from each other while appropriating ideas and technologies they saw as most useful within their own travel paradigms. It was these kinds of moments that typified the social dimensions of Indian and European common travel.
CHAPTER FIVE

TOGETHER

While on a 1733 jaunt to visit his south Virginia land holdings and perhaps scout out some new ones and a mine or two, William Byrd II had a small accident with his horse. Lumbering along the narrow well-wooded paths of Virginia’s south side, his horse knocked its rider into a tree. The result was a knee injury which “pained” Byrd “very much.” Despite his throbbing knee, Byrd noted with some satisfaction that he “broke not the laws of traveling by uttering the least complaint.”324 At another point in the trip, Byrd derided one of his companions, noting the man’s “impatient and peevish temper, equally unfit both for a traveler and a husband.”325 At yet another turn in the trail, the party discovered that a “very careless servant” had lost one of their axes. Once it was discovered, the man was subjected to the dizzying effects of a blanket toss, whereby the miscreant was repeatedly thrown into the air and caught by his comrades by means of an out-stretched blanket. Byrd wrote that by inflicting such a punishment he and his party “exercised the discipline of the woods.”326

Throughout the trip the lord of Westover seemed to be referring to some set of rules that defined the ideal traveler’s temperament, sentiments, and behavior. These

325 Byrd, Prose Works, 383.
326 Ibid., 387.
unwritten “laws of traveling” with its “discipline of the woods” were hardly codified, universally accessible bodies of knowledge. Byrd fashioned the traveler (and himself as an ideal one) by sanctioning certain behaviors and prohibiting others. His vision of the ideal traveler grew from his values as a wealthy Tidewater Virginia planter, and in turn these rules helped to shape exactly what it was to be a member of that gentle society. By noting who did and did not fit the bill, Byrd marked insiders from outsiders, the vulgar from the refined, the gentry from the lower orders, and himself from others. For Byrd and others of his background, the ideal traveler was male—his overt connection of “traveler” and “husband” makes clear that a traveler must be an independent man able to dominate both wife and woods. He must be able to keep a stoic and stolid outward appearance, neither showing too much weakness nor bothering his companions with his own petty sufferings. He must endure pain well, whether it be a bashed knee or a rotted tooth like the one Byrd removed on the trail by tying it to a heavy log with a short string and then jumping forcefully into the air.327 A traveler must be reserved and not “impatient” or “peevish,” both of which were womanly or childish characteristics against which manliness was defined. Travelers, according to Byrd’s rules, should be industrious yet devout enough to respect the Sabbath. A traveler must also be ready and willing to submit himself to the “discipline of the woods” and subject his behavior to the scrutiny of his fellows, and to take his lumps should he be found wanting.

Byrd’s rules reflected the man, his time, and his social network, yet rules like these, however obscure and variable they may have been—and however quietly understood and not reflected upon— informs the ways of all travelers in colonial North

327 Ibid., 405.
America. In his way, Byrd touched on a common process (if not actual values) shared by all travelers, all of whom in their own ways strove to be ideal travelers according to their own social values, needs, and preconceptions.

Although most of Byrd’s attention focused on the failings of his fellow English travelers, there was nevertheless a small group of Tuscarora guides and hunters accompanying the party. These men earned some comment from their planter companion. Byrd claimed that the Indians “have no distinction of days, but everyday a Sabbath.” Byrd employed that old colonial canard (used against almost everyone and every class at one time or another) to claim that Indians were essentially lazy. They were, in Byrd’s estimation, capable of extreme exertion when the need arose, such as when they went to war or “a-hunting,” but exhibited a marked inclination towards “idleness and doing nothing to the purpose.”328

Unlike Byrd, his Indian companions left no journal or musings behind as a testament to how they evaluated their English companions and each other. But they did not appear completely silent in Byrd’s writings either. For example, when the Englishmen took Sunday off from their rigors in respect of the Sabbath, they still needed to eat. The Indian hunters went out on one Sunday and “brought a young doe back with them.”329 The contrast of reclining English and hunting natives amused the hunters, who laughingly commented to their colonial fellows that it seemed the height of sloth and wastefulness to make a habit of “losing one day in seven.”330 On another Sunday, both English and Indian travel companions took time out to bathe in a nearby brook. When the

328 Ibid., 391, 397.
329 Ibid., 391.
330 Ibid.
Englishmen took to swimming, they did so in an awkward fashion involving striking out with “both hands together,” resulting in a considerable amount of noise and splashing and producing very little in the way of forward motion. 331 The Indians, no doubt amused and a bit taken aback by this display, quickly stepped in to show the Virginians their own more efficient means of swimming, a technique that involved using their hands “alternately one after another.” Even the proud Byrd had to admit that this method allowed these Indians “to swim both farther and faster than we do.” 332 When the Virginians did not live up to what the Indian hunters saw as the standards of the ideal traveler, they were quick to offer a rebuke—however gentle or hidden it may have been.

These were important moments of shared time on the trail. As Byrd and his Tuscarora companions learned, travel together provided unique opportunities to witness first hand the skills and manliness of men very different from themselves. Colonization linked the fates of Indians and Europeans as peoples, but travel, temporarily at least, entwined their fates as individuals. With every turn in the road, stream to cross, and meal, travel companions tested their own vision of the ideal traveler and saw how others lived up to their standards. Common travel thus was more than simply getting from one place to another—it was a special opportunity to delineate and expand one’s own personal boundaries through interaction with people from very different backgrounds.

The trail itself created a complex setting for these types of personal encounters. Travel obstacles and hardships and even the more quotidian aspects of travel provided a seemingly objective test of sorts through which travel companions could judge the merits and weaknesses of one another’s travel skills. How travelers handled a given rapid or

331 Ibid., 397.
steep slope in the path and how they made a fire or sought out food all offered direct comparisons in the worth of different solutions and the people behind those choices. When Indians and Europeans disagreed over the mechanics of travel or saw mutually exclusive solution to given problem, all sorts of conflicts resulted. These moments of crisis brought out tensions about leadership and travel skills because so much was at stake in making the right choice. Failure to properly handle a rapid, an enemy, or a rattlesnake all had severe consequences, and travel companions were quick to try to control or mitigate the damage from what they saw as their fellows’ foolish or misinformed solutions.

But travel was not all disaster and crisis. When Byrd and his Tuscarora hunters looked at each other and laughed at what they saw, they played a game shared by many travel companions. Laughter, insults, ridicule, practical jokes, and even outright competition were ways that travelers could contextualize and make sense of their trail experiences. These jibes and japes also reveal the outlines of how different travelers

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332 Ibid.
333 The trail has many of the qualities of what is sometimes called a “liminal space.” In “Betwixt and Between,” in Mahdi, ed., Betwixt and Between, Victor Turner built on Van Gennep, Rites of Passage, and described “liminality” as being a conceptual point between states of being. For example, during initiation rights (a primary focus of many liminality studies), there is a moment when the initiate hovers between their old state of being and the new one. One example Turner used was that of a “novice in a male puberty rite” who, for a brief moment, was “not-boy-not-man.” (Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” 6). Turner also sees the liminal space as “a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.” Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93. This idea of the limen as a conceptual place between states of existence and even between rules for behavior has proven quite useful, particularly for those studying the meeting of peoples from vastly different backgrounds. For example, Greg Dening used the metaphor of “islands—cultural worlds” and “beaches—cultural boundaries” to describe how Marqueses Islanders tried to assert their vision of life across the “beach” which, by its nature, was a liminal space. Dening, Island and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas, 1774-1880 (Honolulu:
constructed their own ideal traveler and what they saw most lacking in their fellows. Different practices, like variant Virginian and Tuscarora swimming techniques, were only one obvious form of difference that could elicit sniggers or comment. Different ideas about how the world worked and explanations for travel events could also bring out a competitive spirit in travelers. Because so many travelers were men, manliness was a theme that came up in many of these competitions. Strength, courage, and adroitness were all manly virtues that made sense to members of Indian and European societies, and many travelers were quick to show that they had these traits whereas their fellows seemed to lack them. In such competitions Indians and Europeans both worked to maintain their own sense of self while also seeking in each other skills, ideas and practices that could be appropriated. Manliness also served as a language for describing and defining differences in settings far removed from more familiar contexts and other external trappings of status.334 In these kinds of trail-based personal contests, less was immediately at stake

University Press of Hawaii, 1980), 20. Dening and David A. Chappell have both pushed liminality even further by suggesting that even the decks of ships can be limens. See Chappell, “Shipboard Relations between Pacific Island Women and Euroamerican Men, 1767-1887,” The Journal of Pacific History 27:2 (December 1992) 131-132. The limen’s conditions of cultural uncertainty and danger, combined with Turner’s postulated realm of possibility, helped to condition travelers’ experiences. In my assessment, competition was one way to make sense of this liminal space and one’s identity within it. See also Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, 52-65, for a discussion of the habitus as a useful model of how individuals construct identities through received knowledge, habit, and experience. 334 To date there have been few discussions of Indian manliness and still fewer attempts to compare Indian and European manly values. Neither set of societies had monolithic conceptions, and internal social differences such as class were powerful shapers of concepts of manliness. For discussions of Indian manliness, see Nathaniel Sheidley “Hunting and the Politics of Masculinity in Cherokee Treaty Making, 1763-75,” in Daunton and Halpem Empire and Others, 167-185. For a culturally mixed context, see Elizabeth Vibert, “Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Fur Traders’ Narratives,” Gender and History, 8:1 (April 1999): 4-21. The term “manliness” appears here in preference to the more common term “masculinity” following the lead of

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than in moments of more obvious crisis. Consequently, travelers felt less need to assert the primacy of their own visions of events and solutions to crises. Instead, differences could lead to laughter, competition, chiding, and posturing.

During his 1793 trek across the Canadian Rockies, the Scots fur trader and explorer Alexander Mackenzie and his party of seasoned Canadian fur traders found themselves in dire straits on a particularly difficult stretch of British Columbia’s Parsnip River. Not only did they face a hazardous stretch of the river, they and their Indian guides disagreed over travel habits and competing ideas of how to cope with the situation. Instead of sharing the dangers in a manner that might have led to one party or the other trying to take control of the moment, Mackenzie and his guides opted for two different approaches. Consequently what might have become a contest of wills, instead became an opportunity for both sides to witness the other at work and offer commentary on the other’s relative strengths and weaknesses.

Mackenzie’s Athabascan guides had “manifested evident symptoms of discontent” at the prospect of paddling through this leg of the river, choked as it was with “fallen trees, and large stones,” in addition to having a fearsome snowmelt-swollen

Gail Bederman, who argues that “manhood” is a more historically resonant term than “masculinity which only came to be used after 1890. Also, the point of manly competitions on the trail was the marking and establishing of male identities—the creation of men. In this context “manliness” with its connotations of control, restraint, and virtue make more sense in this discussion than the more overly scientific and historically later term “masculinity.” See Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For a study of how gender definitions could become an arena of conflict within an Indian community, see Claudio Saunt, “‘Domestick...Quiet Being Broke’: Gender Conflict among Creek Indians in the Eighteenth Century,” in Cayton and Teute, eds., Contact Points, 151-174.
current. The head guide pointed out a not-too-distant mountain and assured the traders that it was "on the other side of a river, into which this empties." In other words, the Sekani guide suggested that it made more sense to bypass the present rapids and swollen lakes by hoofing it to the gentler waters on the other side of the mountain.

But Mackenzie and his men, driven by the explorer’s relentless need for speed in travel and a manly travel ethic that "urged the honour of conquering disasters," preferred to avoid such a long and uphill trudge loaded down with heavy food supplies, hunting and mapping gear, and trade goods. Instead, they chose to take their chances on the water. On the morning of June 13th all was ready to go. At the last moment, Mackenzie had second thoughts and suggested that it may be wiser for him to accompany the Indian guides. But his companions urged him to join them, with an appeal to fellowship that echoed William Byrd’s “laws of travel.” They told him that “if they perish,” then Mackenzie “should perish with them.” Such an appeal to group identity and Mackenzie’s personal manliness was too strong to be ignored and so he took his place in the large bark boat. No sooner had they set off than a disaster offered them the chance for honor. The “violence of the current” drove the boat sideways only to “break her on the first bar” and then send the fractured vessel back and forth between rocks, which smashed its bow and stern respectively until not much was left of either. As the crew and contents spilled out, one of the endangered paddlers, hoping to stabilize what was left of

335 Mackenzie, Journals, 267. Gough, First Across the Continent, 128-33. Gough identifies Mackenzie’s companions on this stretch as being Sekanis; Mackenzie called them the “People of the Rocks.” With Mackenzie were nine men, five of whom were French Canadians. Two “young Indians” were also in the canoe, though who they were is obscure. See Gough, 123.
336 Mackenzie, Journals, 297.
337 Ibid., 299.
the boat, grabbed a low hanging tree branch, only to be “jerked on shore in an instant, and
with a degree of violence that threatened his destruction.” The party’s ammunition was
lost and most of their goods and supplies soaked and damaged. With no option left,
Mackenzie and his rattled crew, “almost in a benumbed state,” set about retrieving what
they could of their belongings.\footnote{Ibid., 296, 299.}

The attempted passage had been a disaster which threatened both the future of the
expedition and the very lives of the party’s members. Nevertheless, Mackenzie and his
crew, driven by the explorer’s ethic at least had demonstrated their manliness to
themselves, and to one another. Mackenzie’s guides were also an audience for this
display of derring-do, even if they were somewhat less than impressed. When confronted
with the icy snowmelt raging downriver, the Athabascans saw no need to push through
by boat. Other less perilous routes were available and they did not share Mackenzie’s
notion of limited time. Nor did they share a travel ethic that saw such obstacles as worthy
challenges, at least not while other prudent options were available. Upon seeing the rocks
and freezing, rushing water turn the canoe into kindling, they understandably assumed the
worst and “sat down and gave vent to their tears” without, as Mackenzie bitterly noted,
“making the least effort to help.”\footnote{Ibid., 267.}

As the fur traders laid out their belongings to dry, repaired their shattered boat,
and planned their next move, the guide who had expressed the gravest doubts about the
river run assumed what Mackenzie called “an air of contentment.”\footnote{Ibid., 297.} The Scotsman
believed this was due to smoke visible in the distant sky, meaning that other Indians

\footnote{Ibid., 267.}
could soon be counted upon to serve this impetuous and unwise group of white men. Mackenzie may have been right that the guide sought release from a service “which he had found so irksome and full of danger,” but the guide’s demeanor probably also carried at least a touch of ‘I told you so.’

Mackenzie made sense of the disaster by falling back on his idea of the ideal traveler and his own understandings of manly behavior. When the party’s morale was at its lowest ebb, Mackenzie tried to bolster the men’s courage with some rum and a speech in which he told them that “our late experience would enable us to pursue our voyage with greater security.” In Mackenzie’s view, the boldness of the attempted passage was enough to trump the stigma of bad judgment, and the lessons learned in the failure would make the next attempt better executed and ultimately successful; indeed, through a mixture of carrying some goods and carefully manipulating the much lighter repaired vessel, the fur traders made it past the worst of the obstacles on June 15th. Mackenzie also reminded his fellows that he “did not deceive them;” they knew fully well of the trip’s risks before they had embarked, and of the “great disgrace that would attend them on their return home, without having attained the object of the expedition.” Mackenzie’s speech was a string of appeals to his fellows’ manliness, touching on honesty, stoicism, resignation, courage, which in total suggested that not continuing on would mean that they would be failing not just as travelers, but as men. Not all of them however, saw the situation—or its reflection on their manliness—in quite the same way.

At least one member of the party rejected Mackenzie’s exhortions, and this skeptic’s actions occasioned another appeal to what Mackenzie saw as the source of the

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341 Ibid., 301.
traders’ manliness. On June 15, a member of the party named Beauchamp “peremptorily refused to embark in the canoe.” This was the “first example of absolute disobedience which had yet appeared during the course of the expedition” and Mackenzie, always jealous of his authority, was not about to let such behavior at such a risky juncture go unpunished. Physical or fiscal punishments would have been difficult to exact on the trail, so Mackenzie instead used a tactic that seems like one taken directly from Byrd’s “laws of travel.” He made fun of the man “representing” him to the crew “as an object of ridicule and contempt for his pusillanimous behavior,” and concluded that he was “unworthy of accompanying us,” despite the fact that he had always been a “very useful, active, and laborious man.”

Mackenzie saw this form of punishment by ridicule and rhetorical isolation as being “very severe.” In the manly world of travel, ridicule and a removal from the bonds of fellowship (however symbolic) were strong sanctions indeed.

Mackenzie’s speeches and behavior were designed to keep his crew in line, but they were also in part intended to send his Indian companions a message about British manly fortitude and perseverance. Even if the Scotsman could not berate his native guides as he did his crew, at least his speech (or at least the tone and hand gestures that went with it) and the fur traders’ example could serve as proof of their quality as men and travelers. The guide’s obvious “air of contentment” likewise carried an equally intentional message. Mackenzie was able to browbeat his fellows into good behavior in part because to some degree they shared his vision of the ideal traveler and did not want to suffer ridicule either in their canoe or back at home. But the Indian guides to whom the British actions were ill-advised and unwise could not be bought with the same currency.

342 Ibid., 299.
The proof of this came on the morning of June 17 when Mackenzie awakened “to be informed” that his guide (like so many discontented Indians) “had deserted.” The plans and admonishments that built up the fur traders’ cohesion and determination only helped convince the Sekani guide that he did not wish to travel any farther in Mackenzie’s company.

Both Mackenzie and his guides had reasons to believe that the other was a poor or insufficiently manly traveler and found convenient opportunities to voice that critique. Just as Mackenzie quietly derided the fatalism and impugned the manliness of his guides’ crying by the side of the river, the Indians could argue that a man with such foolhardy plans was not to be followed. In Mackenzie’s case, he and his guides could take different paths, snipe at each other, and leave it at that. But for two Hudson’s Bay Company employees, one Cree, the other English, caught on Saskatchewan’s Cross Lake in 1784, there was no choice but to face peril together. When the wind became so intense as to threaten to overturn the “small canoe,” the Cree “threw off his belt and loose coat and got ready to swim,” while turning to his companion and calling out “strip, strip man not be long in canoe now man or you will be drowned, drowned man.” The Cree’s plan was to be ready at any second to hit the water unencumbered and ready to swim. But the Englishman, Magnus Twatt, was “buttoned tight in his jacket and could not get free.” Not that nudity would have helped him, as he could not swim a stroke in the first place. Twatt’s only hope lay in pulling as hard as possible for the cover of the shore and hoping for the best. In time the two made it to some reeds by the shore and were able to wait out

343 Ibid., 301.
344 Ibid.
the winds, but the relative merits and weaknesses of both of their differing strategies held
shared consequences. It was the same when Samuel Champlain shot the Lachine Rapids
near Montreal in 1611. His Huron and Algonkian companions were sure to tell the non-
swimmer Champlain what to do if they should lose the canoe in the rapids. "Under no
circumstances" was the Frenchman to let go of the boat; "keep hold of the small pieces of
wood in the centre of the canoe" and wait to be rescued was the order of the day.346 With
that warning, the Indians stripped down (Champlain stayed in his shirt) and set off down
the rapids. Although Champlain had high praise for his allies' canoeing abilities, his
deficiency was clearly a concern for them. His lack of swimming skills meant that should
something go wrong, someone would have to risk himself to save the unskilled European.

Champlain's fellows, in their desire to build a friendly relationship with the
French, did not seem too put-out by their burden. Similarly, there was at least no recorded
hostility between the Cree and Twatt, who otherwise were compatible, if differently
attired, travel companions. But others made clear their discontent when saddled with
ungainly companions, and many European travelers measured up poorly in Indian eyes.
The slightest actions by European travelers could amuse or annoy their Indian
companions during common travel's on-going process of observation, comparison and
critique. When amused or annoyed at the actions of a companion both Indians and
Europeans were quick to make their opinions known. The types of insults they leveled at
each other and the traits they pointed out saw as lacking show both how travelers

345 Richard Glover, ed., David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1812 (Toronto: Champlain
346 Champlain, Works, 2:204.
constructed images of each other as well as which traits they most prized in
themselves.347

For Indians, Europeans lacked fundamental skills, like knowing how and what to
eat on the trail. A priest’s need to blow on his portion of piping-hot cornmeal porridge
elicited great laughter from his companions who, according to the burned cleric,
overlooked the fact that “neither my tongue nor my palate was iron-clad and hardened
like theirs.”348 English travelers in the company of Chickasaws were likely to be called
“shûkàpa” or “akanggâpa,” meaning “swine eater” and “eater of dunghill fouls,” for their
habit of eating dirty barnyard animals rather than good, clean wild ones.349 A
Frenchman’s preference for shooting quail seemed absurd to his Naansis companions
when there were “fat young turkeys” to be had at every bend in the road.350 A European
neophyte’s inability to walk well on snowshoes caused considerable amusement among
his fellows when he “rolled to the bottom” of a slope and came up covered head-to-toe in
snow.351 The weakness of a Jesuit forced to “carry as heavy burdens as [he] could”
resulted in a torrent of laughter and derision from his native escorts who suggested that

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347 Many scholars have addressed the role of insults and derision in Indian-European
relations. See most recently Merrell, Into the American Woods, 151-52, for small sample.
Most of these comments were made post facto by Europeans recording their experiences
with Indians as asides or editorial comments. These comments certainly have much to say
about the European creation of the Indian as a savage and child-like other not fit to
maintain the American continents. See Pratt, Imperial Eyes. In this study, however, only
those insults (and compliments where relevant) that pertain specifically to travel or were
said to have been uttered while in common company are discussed in aid of creating a
picture of how travel companions employed the idea of the ideal traveler to specific travel
experiences.
348 Gabriel Sagard, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons, ed. and trans.,
George M. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 258.
349 Adair’s History, 140.
350 Jean Delanglez, ed., The Journal of Jean Cavelier: The Account of a Survivor of La
Salle’s Texas Expedition, 1684-88 (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1938), 117.
perhaps they should "call a child" to carry both the priest and his burdens.\textsuperscript{352} After an English fur trader and his Chipewyan guides survived a harrowing canoe wreck in which they lost almost all of their possessions, the Englishman pulled out his small pocketknife to use it as a striker for starting a much needed fire. The Chipewyans were astounded to see that he had saved such an item and remarked upon "how avaricious a white man must be, who rushing on death takes care of his little knife."\textsuperscript{353} A French priest, unaccustomed to the close quarters sleeping of a trailside bivouac, showed that he had "no sense" when he started hitting one of his slumbering companions after the man had inadvertently rolled onto the sleeping cleric. The father immediately began "crying out aché aché" thinking the man to be one of the party's many dogs. The bewildered native simply replied "it is not a dog, it is I."\textsuperscript{354}

Indians also witnessed events that solidified their view of Europeans as disorganized and imperceptive travelers. When chaos erupted in Nicholas Cresswell's 1775 party of Ohio river paddlers, the reaction of native observers was laughter. In the midst of a June day's travel, the party believed themselves about to be attacked by several oncoming canoes full of Indians whose paddles became guns in the British travelers' terrified imaginations. They fumbled for their own guns, only to find them "unfit for use by the wet" and in their haste to get "prepared for an engagement" all of their equipment and a "great part" of their provisions were hastily "hoved overboard."\textsuperscript{355} Adding to the confusion was the response of the more fatalistic party members, one of whom, much to

\textsuperscript{351} JR 5:149.
\textsuperscript{352} JR 50:259.
\textsuperscript{353} Thompson's Narrative, 118.
\textsuperscript{354} JR 7:43.
\textsuperscript{355} Journal of Nicolas Cresswell, 91-93.
Cresswell’s anti-Catholic chagrin, “laid down in the bottom of the canoe, begun to tell his rosaries, and howled in Irish” while another “weeping, praying, said ave Mary’s in abundance at the same time hugging a little wooden crucifix he pulled from his bosom most heartily.”\textsuperscript{356} Once the Indian canoes glided close enough, the unnerved Britons saw that they had misread the intentions of this group of Delaware men and women and realized that their fears were groundless. Cresswell recorded the amused Delawares’ reaction to the jittery European’s preparations; “they had seen our confusion and laughed at us for our fears.”\textsuperscript{357}

The inabilities of the French priests and inexperienced explorers traveling to the Mississippi with Pierre Espirit Radisson annoyed rather than amused the party’s fourteen French-allied Algonquians, who “complained much that the French could not swim.”\textsuperscript{358} They could not have been too pleased either at their untutored companions’ insistence upon marking each arrival and departure with an inadvertently enemy-alerting gun shot or trumpet blast. When the Frenchmen were not busy broadcasting their position via song and horn to the feared Iroquois, they were trying to hamper the Indians’ hunting. At one point early in the trip the Frenchmen warned a group of hunting party to “look to themselves” with care as they set off to get some game. The Indians laughed at this misplaced caution and shot back that the French “were women” and that the Iroquois would “durst not set on them.”\textsuperscript{359} A little while later the bulk of the French finally turned back, finding the trip simply too much for them. Radisson and his brother-in-law Jean Baptiste des Groseilliers, both seasoned travelers in the Indian style, opted to continue the

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{358} Explorations of Radisson, 84.
trek and noted with some satisfaction that the Indians had no criticism of their travel skills. Radisson also noted that when the rest of the French left, the Indians were “not sorry for their departure.” When Europeans mastered some or many of the native ideal traveler’s skills, they could be valued companions, but more often Indians saw them as ill mannered stumble bums.

For their part, Europeans were quick to mock and deride Indian travel habits and skills when they differed from their own or made them look foolish in European eyes. Radisson himself offered a critique of his Iroquoian companion’s swimming abilities which, unlike Byrd, seemed to suggest that it was the Indians who were the poorer swimmers. He noted that his companion swam “like a water dog” and that “all the wildmen swims like water dogs, not as we swim.” Radisson did not offer an explanation of his own swimming technique, but his allusion to a widespread practice of dog paddling seems less than flattering at best and bestializing at worst. Although many Indians quickly became superb horsemen soon after the animals first pounded American ground, some Europeans, no doubt more proud of their abilities when mounted than when riding shanks mare, did not miss the chance to poke fun at those Indians who failed to exhibit the best dressage. William Byrd, for example, found the sight of an Indian mounted on a horse laughable--a harsh critique indeed given eighteenth-century Virginians’ close associations with horsemanship and social status. Upon witnessing the arrival of a group of Saponi “grandees,” Byrd recorded that the well-respected tribal leaders rode their mounts “more awkwardly than sailors, and the women who sat astride.”

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359 Ibid., 81.
360 Ibid., 84.
361 Ibid., 62.
Byrd went on to suggest that the Saponis themselves may have felt uncomfortable with the beasts because they refused to “mount their ponys” until they were far from English eyes and ridicule. 362 The Huguenot traveler John Fontaine also noted that his Indian companions in 1716 were “not accustomed to ride” the horses he and his party took for granted as a means of transportation. Fontaine and his well-heeled Virginian fellows took great joy in watching one “Indian chief” strip naked at the banks of the Meherrin River and lead his horse across the ford rather than riding high and dry in English fashion. This different approach to crossing the river made the travelers “all merry for a while.” 363

When crossing the Hudson River in the fall of 1679, Jasper Danckaerts and his companions had a good laugh at the expense of a local Indian who in their view did not properly understand the economics of ferry usage. Just as a full ferry was about to put in for the far shore, an Indian came up and “asked the skipper if he might go over with him.” What resulted was an odd exchange over the price of the ride. The ferryman replied that he was too laden with “freight” and could not fit the man on board. But the Indian quickly inquired how much people paid for their rides. Upon learning that the price was “six stivers” in locally produced strings of shell beads (one of the many currencies in use in Dutch New York), the Indian responded “I will give you seven.” This struck the Dutch travelers as a ludicrous bargain. As they saw it, the Indian had “valued himself less” by offering more money for the same service, yet had “bound himself to pay more than the others.” 364

The inability to ride a horse, cross a river, or swim well could all be the basis for one traveler laughing at or chiding another for not living up to one’s model of the ideal traveler. From these varied instances, Indians and Europeans learned valuable lessons about who they were traveling with, but they also reveal in sparse relief a few elements of different native and imported versions of the ideal traveler. Travelers in the native style should be hardened to the trail’s conditions and cuisine; they should be able to see the good from the bad and know which game to take and which to avoid; they should be strong and able to carry their share of the group’s burden with ease; and they should be easy to be with, either asleep or awake. European travelers also prized skill and savvy, although perhaps with different emphasis than their native companions. “Fat turkeys” may have been the better catch in native eyes, but a gentleman’s fowling piece was better employed on more delicate game. Keeping one’s possessions on or nearby at all times ensured that they would be there later when most needed. And when one was so reliant on such items, it only made sense to do all one could to keep them clean and dry both on water and at fords. Likewise, trumpet blasts and singing were signs of good military order and hearty comradeship and were to be prized. A good traveler should also be ready to cut a shrewd bargain whenever entering into commerce for goods or services.

If native and European versions of the ideal traveler diverged over the particulars of horsemanship and ferry fares, they could also converge on some common ideas. When Byrd condemned his companion for exhibiting traits unbecoming both a “traveler” and a “husband,” he unambiguously suggested that travel was a manly endeavor. In many respects his native companions would have agreed, although their version of manliness

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365 Byrd, Prose Works, 405.
may have focused less on domination and refinement than did Byrd’s. The trail was a fine place to test one’s manliness against both the demands of travel and one’s fellow travelers. Travel demanded physical skill and courage, a keen eye for opportunities and potential problems, and an understanding of the world and how it worked. All of these were traits that Indians and Europeans generally saw as important parts of a man’s identity and status. When visions of traveling differed, travel companions were left to scratch their heads at the oddness, stupidity, or ungainliness of their fellows. But when manliness was on the line, the result was often competition to see who was the better traveler and the better man. These competitions could take many forms and focus on many aspects of a traveler’s abilities. But they were also part of the process of testing and observing that was so much a part of common travel.

Both Indians and Europeans enjoyed certain elementary forms of manly competition such as footraces, which could easily be played out between travel companions. In 1636 a young Frenchman named Godefoy beat a Huron companion in a foot race. Although the priest who recorded the incident noted that Godefoy was “of light and agile body,” the Hurons themselves were astounded to see a Frenchman run so fast, as they had come to see the French as “turtles in comparison” with themselves. On returning from a raid into Iroquoia, a captive “challenged all the young men” of the mixed Algonquian and French party to “a race, either with snowshoes on their feet, or without snowshoes.” Several men in the party “entered the lists against him,” but in the end an Iroquois warrior, soon to be burned to death near Quebec, “carried off the

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366 JR 9:279.
victory." That Indians were speedy runners with remarkable endurance became something of a truism among Europeans, many of whom had considerable trouble keeping up. As one traveler wrote, his companions could run for upwards of a dozen miles “without any seeming toil, they would stretch on, leave us out of sight, and out wind any horse.” But native speed was not always envied and such compliments were also roundabout ways of saying that Indians were in many ways no better than the horse they could “wind.” Likewise, one 1673 English traveler in Virginia claimed that “Indians valour consists most in their heeles for he that can run best is accounted ye the best man.” Good runners, yes, but to this observer speed was the handmaiden of cowardice as he insuated that his “valour” presumably consisted in standing up to a threat. But in the long run, such colonialist dismissals were cold comfort for European travelers huffing and puffing in an Indian’s wake.

Wrestling was also a way of taking a man’s measure, and at least one party of Europeans found themselves in manly competition with Indian men almost as soon as they met each other. John Davis’s crew in 1586 interpreted the Davis Straight Eskimo custom of leaping in greeting as form of physical challenge, and Davis immediately set his own men “to leape with them.” He noted with some pride that his men “did over-leape them.” Davis recorded that “from leaping they went to wrestling,” where the English sea dogs discovered the Eskimos to be “strong and nimble” and to have such

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367 JR 32:137.
368 Adair’s History, 341.
369 Alvord and Bidgood, First Explorations of the Virginians, 222.
“skill in wrestling” that the natives were able to “cast” some of the crew’s best competitors.\textsuperscript{370}

Racing, leaping, and wrestling were all simple and unhidden forms of manly contest. But other competitions between Indians and Europeans sometimes emerged from less overtly competitive exchanges. For example, when Martin Frobisher’s band of English sailors learned how the local Eskimos used a “long pole with a snare at the end” to “pluke” down birds nesting on a cliff face, the English “knew that they had a better way of their owne.”\textsuperscript{371} Taking a large harquebus in hand, one of the crew blasted a nest off the rock face, which with one shot killed “seven or eight” of the nesting birds. Whether or not the Eskimos understood this slaughter as a “better way” to hunt birds was not recorded, but it is clear that the English saw in the native demonstration a chance to make a case for the merit of their own skills. But in time, as Indians became masters of firearms in their own right, guns themselves could be used to see who was the better man. One Ojibwa man was much amused to watch a group of English hunters try repeatedly to take down a loon which sat about 150 yards from them. As shot after shot missed its mark, the Ojibwa laughed at the hunters “and told them they were old women.” The Englishmen, their manhood impugned, challenged their ridiculer to try his own luck at the obstinate bird “which he instantly did.” First “taking his gun and resting it against a tree,” he then fired a well-aimed shot, which pierced “the loon right through the neck.” The feat of arms was made all the more impressive by the loon’s reputation among

\textsuperscript{370} Albert Hastings Markham, ed., The Voyages and Works of John Davis the Navigator (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1880), 18.
\textsuperscript{371} Quinn, New American World, 4:290.
Europeans as a singularly difficult bird to hit; Frenchmen even adopted the bird’s Ojibwa name *maunk* and nicknamed the bird *manquer*, meaning “to fail.”

Another meaning-rich and well-documented example of travelers reacting to a perceived but unintended challenge was the way many European travelers reacted to the widespread native practice of welcoming guests by bodily carrying them. Indians who carried did so with a few different techniques ranging from “grasping” a guest “under the arms as though to help [him] walk” to picking travelers up any carrying them “bodily in their arms.” Recording such acts allowed writers to both flatter and bestialize Indians by expounding upon the “bignesse and stature” of America’s natives which rendered such devotions small exertions. But many European travelers had mixed reactions when the same strong native arms reached out to carry a new-arrival into a village, over a rushing stream, out of a canoe, or into a council meeting. Some travelers did not seem to mind, and perhaps enjoyed the chance to give their legs a rest. Certainly the Native connection between carrying and honored-status flattered the egos of the carried and writing about these moments allowed Europeans to portray themselves as men of great stature in native eyes. Also, the natural European analogy to horse and rider served to elevate the European rider and denigrate the native beast. Etienne Bourgomont for example, showed

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372 *Long’s Voyages*, 49. Long, who is at times a questionable source, did not specify the identity of the Indian in this parable-like tale. The larger context though suggests that he was Ojibwa. Long goes on to claim the French name *manquer* also carries the implication “very difficult to kill.”

373 It is worth noting that this practice seems to have been limited to state societies like the Mississippian chiefdoms and their historical descendents in the South and Midwest. The St. Lawrence Iroquois used the practice as did some of the eighteenth-century Plains tribes and the people of the desert Southwest. The more mobile peoples of Canada did not ordinarily carry their leaders, and neither did the northeastern Algonquians, although Powhattan of Virginia was at times borne on a litter.

374 *Iberville’s Gulf Journals*, 58; Hammond and Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate*, 131.
no objection to being carried “into the dwellings” of Kansas Indian chiefs. Likewise Jean
Baptiste Bienville went quietly when Natchitoches men “carried [him] on their
shoulders” to visit their headman, as did Robert Salford when a South Carolina native
carried him “on his shoulders over any of the branches of creekes or plashy corners of
marshes in our way.”

While some Europeans were glad to take the proffered ride, there were others who
found it too uncomfortable, too undignified, or too demeaning to endure. The only times
European travelers physically carried others was when the human cargo was either very
young, very aged (as like when Louis Hennepin carted the sixty-five-year old Father
Gabriel), or when they were ill or wounded (as when Alexander Mackenzie carried an
ailing young guide on his back in order to get across a river). All of these associations
must have swirled in a European traveler’s mind as he reeled on an Indian’s shoulders.
When Father St. Cosme’s Arkansas guides insisted on carrying him and his fellows into
town during their 1698 visit, the priest teetered on his porters’ shoulders as the man “was
sinking under his burden.” The prospect of making a humiliating and painful fall coupled
with the awkwardness of having and Indian’s head firmly wedged between his legs so
distressed the priest that he “got down in spite” of his overloaded companion’s wishes
and “walked up the hill” unattended. Only after being “compelled” to remount did he
allow himself to be carried into town. Nicolas Perrot invoked European metallurgical
skills when demurring a ride offered by his Macouten companions. Since he and his

375 Quinn, New American World, 4:212.
376 Frank Norall, ed., Bourgmont: Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725 (Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 127; Iberville’s Gulf Journals, 150-51; Salley,
Narratives of Early Carolina, 90.
377 The Journeys of La Salle 1:69; Mackenzie, Journals, 395.
colleagues were able to “shape..iron,” he assured the Indians that “they had the strength
to walk” unaided. For Perrot, carrying carried with it a perceived negative critique of
European abilities in general and he was not prepared to be demeaned by native habits.
La Salle and his party also protested when their Caddoan hosts insisted on carrying them,
despite the fact that one of them, Joutel, by his own admission “was of a pretty large
size” and loaded down with “clothes, a firelock, a case of pistols, powder and ball, a
kettle, and other implements.” This must have been quite a sight since Joutel was
reportedly taller than his carrier and it took the aid of two others to hold up the
Frenchman’s feet which otherwise “would have hung upon the ground.”

A loss of personal control through physical discomfort, an embarrassing loss of
dignity, a perceived challenge to one’s strength and manhood, and perhaps even some
sexual anxiety, all lurked behind some Europeans’ dislike of being carried by an Indian,
however well meaning. Not every carrying technique fit the horse and rider metaphor so
neatly and as discomfited as Joutel, Perrot, and St. Cosme must have felt at the prospect
of mounting an Indian’s back, slightly more anxiety attached itself to the thought of being
carried in an Indian’s arms with, as one initiate described it, his “feet in the air.”

Jacques Cartier offered a fleeting glimpse into the issues that may have been lurking in
the minds of European travelers on an Indian’s back or in his arms. Cartier described
how in 1536 the men of Hochelaga picked him up in their arms “as easily as if he had

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378 Kellogg, Early Narratives of the Northwest, 358.
379 Ibid., 85. See also Axtell, Beyond 1492, 42-43.
380 The Journeys of La Salle, 2:174.
381 Quinn, New American World, 2:29.
been a six-year-old.\textsuperscript{382} Herein lay the central problem for some Europeans. If riding an Indian was at best reassuringly like riding a horse, then being cradled in Indian arms was uncomfortably infantilizing. This was a bigger problem than one might expect, since being a child or a boy was essentially the opposite of being a man, meaning that what was intended as an act of kindness or respect was in part received as a diminution of manhood.\textsuperscript{383} In European eyes, being helped along implied that one was weak, aged, or young—in all ways not quite a man. It is telling that when the Venetian geographer, cartographer, and travel narrative editor Giovanni Batistta Ramusio produced his 1550s print of Cartier’s Hochelaga map and incidents from the visit, he chose to replace Cartier’s recorded infantalizing ride with the image of two Frenchmen riding in style on the backs of two Hochelagans—an incident not recorded by Cartier at all.\textsuperscript{384} Presumably

\textsuperscript{382} Cook, \textit{Voyages of Jacques Cartier}, 58. Cartier recorded that Agouhanna, the headman of Hochelaga was carried by “nine or ten men” on a sort of litter made from a “large deer skin.”(63.) This means that the form of carrying that Cartier benefited from was not the traditional way of carrying men of at least the highest prestige. Since carrying does not seem to have been widely used in Iroquoian societies it may have been that the Hochelagan’s act may have been in response to a perceived weakness on Cartier’s part.


\textsuperscript{384} Unless Ramusio was simply editing Cartier’s experiences, he may have been relying on the somewhat dubious work of André Thevet. Thevet was not in Canada but did produce a highly detailed account of the French experiences there allegedly based on his conversations with mostly semi-anonymous sources. He told the probably apocryphal morality tale (attributed to “Captain J.C.”) of a “young Angevin gentleman” who took to “joy rid[ing]” (promener a son plaisir) around on the back of “a certain savage.” Over the course of several rides the Angevin increasingly exploited the rider-animal analogy so obvious to European minds. When the “Canadian savage” stumbled while going down a hill, his French rider began to “beat unreasonably with blows of his stick” until the angered Indian unceremoniously dumped his Angevin load “into the depths of the sea.” The story ended when another Frenchman stepped in and killed the offending Iroquoian. No one else recorded such a potentially pivotal moment and surely such an act would have changed the otherwise quiet tone of Cartier’s Hochelaga stay. Roger Schlesinger and Arthur A. Stabler, ed. and trans., \textit{André Thevet’s North America: A Sixteenth-Century View} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 101. Also, in his
European print buyers wanted to see Indians as beasts of burden, not nurse maids to exploration’s heroes, while more than a few Europeans “would not suffer” to be carried in their native companions’ arms. 

In a few cases, travel companions even turned singing into a competition. A group of Algonquians dining with Gabriel Sagard and some Hurons went out of their way to show the priest and his allies that they could “sing and fence as well as our men.” A group of Frenchmen, camped near a party of Abenakis in Maine’s backwoods, took the Indians’ singing and dancing as a sort of challenge. Led by a priest, the French began to sing hymns in an attempt to outdo the musical natives. After running through their hymn repertoire, the French choir turned to secular songs “with which they were familiar.” When these too were finally exhausted without any visible impact on the native revelers, the French “began to mimic the singing and dancing” of their Abenaki neighbors. This last performance did the trick and the startled Indians stopped their own vocalizations and “began to listen” to their French imitators. But no sooner had the Indians stopped singing than the French did the same, waiting until the Indians began again to restart their parody. The attending priest admitted that this schoolyard prank was “really very comical;” no one recorded whether the Indians enjoyed the joke.

notes on Cartier’s travels, H.P. Biggar wrote that the French were carried “as on horse back” The Voyages of Jacques Cartier, Publications of the Public Archives of Canada 11 (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1924): 147, 172. Presumably this is based on Thevet’s account. These experiences better resemble the role that carrying played in colonial era travel in parts of the Andes where the mountains’ steep heights, deeply rutted roads, and trackless thickets made carrying by natives one of the only way European colonial travelers could get around. See Michael Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 287-335.

387 JR 2:37.
Singing was also a vehicle for the 1700 French Mississippi mapping party, lead by Pierre LeMoyne d’Iberville, to show their mettle to their Indian companions. Bad timing, and perhaps some poor or mischievous guiding, led the party into a region flooded with cold water up to their “bellies and armpits.” In such fatiguing travel conditions, a number of the Frenchmen “were so seized with chills in the water that they climbed into trees to get some relief.”\(^{388}\) Throughout their soggy ordeal the French did not stop “singing and laughing,” partially to keep up their morale but also, as their leader noted, “we wish to show our guide that fatigue does not distress us.”\(^{389}\) He might have added that he probably also did not want his reading audience to think the less of them either.

Time together on the trail also provided opportunities to ask long-held questions about how other people understood their world. Some of these were friendly and respectful exchanges.\(^{390}\) For example, William Byrd used the quiet of an October night in 1728 to chat with his Saponi hunter Ned Bearskin about the latter’s religious beliefs. Bearskin outlined, and Byrd recorded, a vision of the afterlife that mixed traditional and Christian elements, including divided paths leading to lands where “every month is May” and “the earth brings forth corn spontaneously without labour” to be eaten by people eternally young and strong, or to a place guarded by a “hideous old woman whose head is cover’d with rattle-snakes instead of tyresses” where “tis always winter,” and “all the

\(^{388}\) Iberville’s Gulf Journals, 150.  
\(^{389}\) Ibid.  
people are old, have no teeth and yet are very hungry.” What was most surprising to Byrd was not the details of Bearskin’s cosmology but rather the “freedom” with which he related it. The closeness of travel had allowed Bearskin to let his guard down and share some of his most deeply held beliefs with his fellows. But for some who did the same, the result was merciless ridicule and confrontation. When fur trader David Thompson asked his Cree companion why he always guarded closely the elements of his faith, the man bluntly replied “you white men always laugh and treat with contempt what we have heard and learned from our fathers; why should we expose ourselves to be laughed at.”

Thompson protested his own innocence of this charge, evidently forgetting that he had earlier lambasted the “pretensions” of his guides when they claimed that their singing had calmed a three-day-long steady wind. “If you possess such power” demanded Thompson, “why did you not sing on the first day of our being here?”

The shoe fit just as well on the other foot. When Thompson wanted to take scientific measurements of a freshly killed moose, his guides made it clear that they did not approve such activity and would not allow it “for fear that their [the animals’] Manitou would be angry.” The same hunters also heaped scorn on Thompson’s explanation for what motivated animals’ behavior. The fur trader explained that “instinct” or “the free and voluntary actions of an animal for its self preservation” was the driving these beasts’ conduct. His companions were not persuaded and replied,

“Oh, oh, then you think this herd of deer rushed forward over deep swamps,

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392 Ibid., 203.
393 David Thompson’s Narrative, 79.
394 Ibid., 23.
395 Ibid., 88.
in which some perished, the other ran over them; down steep banks to
break their necks; swam across rivers, where the strong drowned the weak;
went a long way through the woods where they had nothing to eat, merely to
take care of themselves.”

When faced with the explanation, the Crees came to their own conclusion about the
reasoning power of their companion and his people: “you white people, you look like
wise men, and talk like fools.”

Practical jokes were also a way that travelers could test boundaries and win small
victories over their companions. Some japes were simple tricks which preyed on the
ignorance of a companion. For example, when in 1661 Radisson and Groseilliers met
with a group of Sioux near Lake Superior, their companions’ unfamiliarity with gun
powder occasioned a startling trick. As was true of many Indians, the Sioux were in the
habit of making small offerings of powdered tobacco by sprinkling it on a fire. For
reasons unstated, the Frenchmen decided to surprise their new friends by pouring some
black powder on the council fire, intending to make them believe that was some of [their]
tobacco.” The resulting explosion and cloud of sulfurous white smoke “made the brands
fly from one side to the other.” It also made the Sioux fly away from the fire “without
any further delay” having never seen “a sacrifice of tobacco so violent.” The Sioux were
so shocked that they concluded that the two French travelers were “the devils of the
earth.”

Several decades later a group of Missouri Indians, impressed by gunpowder’s
capabilities, asked some French traders in their company “how the French came by this
powder?” The hunters disingenuously answered that it was specially cultivated in fields

396 Ibid., 87.
and “harvested like indigo and millet in America.” The industrious Missouris, believing they had found the key to end their reliance on French powder suppliers, saw to it that some was carefully planted in a well-tended, specially-guarded field. When in time no powder plants bloomed, the Indians presumably realized that they had been hoodwinked. But as the Frenchman who recorded this tale of deception noted, “it should be remembered that Indians are fooled just once and they never forget it.” The next French trader to pass through the area was robbed blind by the Missouris in retaliation. When he complained to the local head man, he was simply told that he would have to wait to receive justice until “the Indians had harvested the powder planted upon the advice of his countryman.”

Indians were not only the victims of practical jokes—they could also be the instigators. The difficulty of interpreting Indian practical jokes is knowing when they happened. European chroniclers were quick to note their own jokes, japes, and editorial asides at the expense of Indian companions, but may not have been so assiduous about the laughter behind their own backs. Indian japes are hard to pin down simply because Europeans may not have even known that they had taken place. At least one such example is clear enough, though, and made all the more delicious by the fact that its author never seemed to have understood how much of a brunt he was in Indian eyes.

In September 1791, Peter Fidler set off for the Northwest Territories’ Slave River in the company of a group of Chipewyan Indians. Fidler’s mission was to study the area and strengthen trade connections between the natives and his employer, the Hudson’s

397 Explorations of Radisson, 135.
Bay Company. Laden with trade goods and surveying equipment, he lumbered off, diligently recording the distances and directions of his daily marches. But what he did not seem to know was that while his hosts were willing, even eager, to build new trade ties, they did not think much of the travel abilities or manliness of the company's representative. Early on, the men began to leave Fidler behind with the women as they set off to hunt game. On its surface this was no big deal; after all, Englishmen were not the hunters the Chipewyans were and Fidler with his notebooks and quadrant would only get underfoot. On September 16 Fidler recorded that "all the men went on hunting and the women and myself took the canoes thro the swamp."  

And so it was for the rest of the fall: the men went out to kill beavers and buffalo while Fidler and the women followed them, bringing in the carcasses of the fresh kills. Fidler was content to record the directions of his travels and did not seem to mind straddling the gender line. By the time the weather turned cold, it had become routine for Fidler to be left behind with the women on an almost daily basis. It was then that the Indians made the next step in their feminization of their English guest. Seeming oblivious to the implications of his acquisition, Fidler wrote that he "got a cap made of a beaver skin after the manner of the womens which is very well adapted for keeping snow from ones neck going thro the woods (italics added)." The hat may well have been an effective covering, but the humor inherent in his current role and appearance could not

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398 Bossu's Travels, 86. This tale made many appearances in many places in American frontier folklore. See also James Axtell, "Through Another Glass Darkly: Early Indian Views of Europeans," in After Columbus, 139, 271.
400 Journals of Hearne and Turnor, 502.
401 Ibid., 527.
have been lost on the Indians who, after all, were directing his deportment. When a few weeks later Fidler tore his “old cotton trousers all to pieces” he had no recourse left to keep warm but to “wrap a blanket about me like a woman's petticoat to protect me from the cold (italics added).”\(^\text{402}\) At this point the skirted man in the woman’s hat trudging around with the group’s women and children must have cut quite a figure.

Making matters worse for all was Fidler’s comical clumsiness. On one occasion he reentered a tent after taking some star readings. Hoping to get a good look at his quadrant in the fire light and “read off the observation,” he instead found himself pinned “prostrate” to the ground and covered with drying meat when the drying racks collapsed on his head.\(^\text{403}\) At another time he leaned too close to a large cooking fire when a sudden “flame of wind” blew the hotter flames right into his face. The result was what Fidler called “the most expeditious shave I ever had tho’ somewhat disagreeable” when the flames took off his beard “as clean as if it had just been shaved.”\(^\text{404}\) While these accidents were largely Fidler’s own doing they could only have reinforced his native companions image of him as a bumbler and further marked his a fitting brunt for future jokes. If the Indians laughed at Fidler, they did so either behind his back or in such a way as for him not to notice. Or perhaps Fidler was so absorbed in his measuring distance that he failed to notice how he was measuring up as a man in Chipewyan eyes.

Traveling in similar conditions, on similar terrain, and with members of some of the same bands, Hudson’s Bay man Samuel Hearne became the brunt of a singularly cruel joke (not at his expense, however) during his Arctic coastal trip in 1771. His guides

\(^{402}\) Ibid., 530.
\(^{403}\) Ibid., 532.
\(^{404}\) Ibid., 544.
had planned to raid an Eskimo encampment near the mouth of the Coppermine River, despite Hearne’s objections that the “scheme” was fraught with dangers as well as “trouble and fatigue.” 405 They reacted to Hearne’s caution with “great marks of derision” and accused him of being “afraid of the Eskimaux.” Hearne protested that for all he cared his companions could “render the name and race of the Eskimaux extinct,” and ultimately had to realize that it was more in his interest to say nothing more about the raid which finally went off as planned. 406 But during the raid, two of the Indians found a grim moment to tease Hearne about his initial reluctance to attack the Eskimos.

In his journal Hearne distanced himself from the raiders’ “barbarity,” but at the time he was right in the thick of it, watching in horror as naked Eskimo men, women, and children fled their tents and ran anywhere they could to escape the violent surprise assault. At one point a “young girl, seemingly about eighteen years of age” ran straight at him in her frantic desire to escape her pursuers. To Hearne’s shock, two of his companions speared the young woman in her side and she fell at Hearne’s feet and “twisted round” the Englishman’s legs so that he could not “disengage” himself from her “dying grasps.” The whole scene was too much for Hearne, who immediately “solicited very hard for her life,” thus breaking his vow and once again risking his esteem in his companions’ eyes. The two warriors “stuck both their spears through her body, and transfixed her to the ground.” They then turned their attentions to Hearne. With the shrieks and screams of war all around and the dying exertions of a young woman “twining around their spears like an eel,” the two men looked Hearne “sternly in the face”

405 Hearne, A Journey From Prince of Wales’s Fort (1911), 149-50.
406 Ibid., 150.
and began to make fun of his apparent weakness, suggesting that perhaps their companion “wanted an Eskimaux wife.”

For the most part these small contests over running, jumping, shooting, singing, and knowledge were good natured, or at least not motivated by anger. Competitors and jokers certainly took each others’ measure through these contests and tried their best to win the day, but whether winner or loser, in these instances, the parties let the matter drop. Similarly, practical jokes relied on private jokes and small tricks, both seen and hidden, which allowed a private laugh but did not boil over into real trouble. But it was not always thus. In many travel relationships, personal competition, different versions of the ideal traveler, and the trail’s hardships combined and became the basis of outright hostility.

When tensions were high between travel companions, the simplest actions could lead to a fight. Perceived and intended slights could become real issues between travel companions. When some Chipewyan Indians accompanying Alexander Mackenzie to the Arctic Ocean in 1789 began to make fun of the way that his Canadian “foreman” used his paddle, the result was an angry exchange of words. While passing time with the Sioux in 1767, Jonathan Carver set about some routine maintenance on the canoe he would soon need to take from the current Mississippi’s head waters location to the trade post at Michilmacinac. While he was busy, a group of young women approached him and inquired as to whether their “sweethearts’ could use the vessel to cross the river from the far bank. The boat being in poor shape, Carver refused. The women then set about finding another vessel in which to ferry their paramours across the river. This took some

407 Ibid., 179.
time, and when the young men inquired about the delay, they were informed that the
“white man would not let them have his canoe.” Incensed at the seeming selfishness of
this act, and no doubt a bit fired up over their unwanted wait, one of the young men “in a
great passion” ran up to the canoe “and with his hatchet gave it several strokes which
damaged it greatly.”

Carver’s proprietary sense had made him an enemy, while the pervasive Indian
belief in Europeans’ greediness colored the young men’s vision of what had just
transpired. Carver protested in his journal that the women did not tell their friends the real
reason why he denied them the canoe— that it needed repair. But pre-existing stereotypes
formed their own context for Carver’s denial in Sioux minds and Carver’s denial both
reinforced their prejudices while being interpreted in their light.

Despite Carver’s unfulfilled demand that the offender be beaten, no blows were
exchanged. But some confrontations went much further. Radisson found that the “long
familiarity” he had with one Iroquois canoe mate “breeded contempt.” The two would
“take nothing from one another” and it became a common sight on that 1656 trip for
Radisson and his partner to “go together by the ears” and fight “very often” until both
were fully “covered in blood.” The rest of the party enjoyed the drama and only
interceded when they saw one of the combatants “take either gun or sword.” Their fights
were so unremitting that even the hard work of moving their boat through the water
offered no respite. On more than one occasion, the rest of the travelers were treated to the
scene of their own Punch and Judy flailing away with their paddles, “flying water at one

408 Mackenzie, Journals, 217.
409 Journals of Jonathan Carver, 115.
another.\textsuperscript{410} A Soussaki man traveling with a French Jesuit and some traders in 1672 took a beating from one of the Frenchman’s more skilled hands when the two engaged in “fisticuffs.” Later the Indian tried to use his skills as a marksman to best his companions. He boasted that he “could shoot better” than the French and challenged the Blackrobe to a shooting match. The priest demurred, claiming that as a priest he “did not pride [him]self upon being a hunter or a soldier; and that he could address himself to the French if he wished to fight.” Remembering his earlier drubbing, the man backed off and “put an end to his chatter.”\textsuperscript{411}

One man’s “chatter” may have been silenced, but throughout the colonial era Indian and European travel companions continued to chatter about what was right and wrong in their fellows. Sometimes the consequences were a bloodied nose, a hacked canoe, or soaking wet paddlers. Other times there was little more resulting than derisive sniggering or hurt feelings. But the ridicule and challenges Indian and European travel companions leveled at each other revealed in outline the travel values and simple manliness they prized most in themselves. If Europeans were clumsy and foolish, then Indians were dawdlers who comported themselves awkwardly. From swimming to riding, from running to singing, time together on the trail provided Indians and Europeans the opportunity to push each others’ limits and try to take the measure of one another as ideal travelers. These contests were fundamental parts of common travel, while also being important aspects of how travelers defined themselves in relation and opposition to their fellows.

\textsuperscript{410} Explorations of Radisson, 57.
\textsuperscript{411} JR 57:281, 285.
In May 1670, armed with a commission of exploration from Virginia's governor Sir William Berkley, John Lederer set off to see the lands west of the tidewater. This was Lederer's second of three westward forays; his first trip the year before, had brought him to the Appalachian Mountains, presumably the edge of his three Chickahominy guides' knowledge. But this time he hoped to go farther. Accompanying him on the trip were Major William Harris, a troop of horsemen, and a handful of Indian guides.

Unlike so many other Europeans in America, seventeenth-century Virginians showed relatively little interest in lands remote from their fields and homes. Lederer was one of a small group of Virginians who perused the interior. He kept a thin diary of his trips, whose geographical imprecision and vagaries have succeeded in keeping exploration scholars puzzled as they try reconstruct the routes Lederer's three westerly treks. But he did not skimp on his descriptions of his encounters with the Indians he met and with whom he traveled. In fact, the events of 1670 touch on many of the themes of competition, conflict, and control covered in this study.

Lederer did not name the five Indians who set off with the party. They may have included the three Chickahominys who accompanied him in 1669 and told Lederer about the hypnotic powers of rattlesnakes. Whether these were the same men, they were

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412 See Briceland, Westward from Virginia for more on seventeenth-century Virginians’ relatively hesitant westward exploration.
certainly a few of the many Indians who gained personal benefit (if not historical fame) from their travels. Like Ned Bearskin, they may have sought a chance to travel beyond the confines of a colonial reservation, or perhaps they were men like Garakontié and used their bodies and travel experience to build strong ties between peoples. Or they may instead have been like Hans, Shamokin Daniel, Enoe Will, or the men and women following fur captains Matonnabbee and Nestabeck, hiring themselves to serve as guides, hunters, or porters for European travelers. Whoever they were, and whatever their motivations and desires, they remain obscure in documents whose focus—colonial travel and exploration—could not have occurred without their aid.

Travel with Europeans could serve many purposes for Indians. The benefits and motivations varied considerably, not just between tribes, but between people of different stations within those tribes. What began in the sixteenth century as a relationship built on force or curiosity became a complex trail-based economy as the size and scope of European settlement grew. Participation in this economy varied, depending on the degree of Indians' daily contact with colonists or how tied into colonial trades were specific Indians. But in all cases, Indians did the best they could to turn the European need for their travel assistance to their own benefit.

Early in his 1670 trip, Lederer and company stopped at a Piedmont Monacan village to gather information about the path ahead. There they talked with “an ancient man” who “described with a staffe two paths on the ground.” Like so many other Indian leaders for whom knowledge of geography was one of many sources of social prestige, the old Monacan not only told the Virginians the best route westward, but subtly

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413 Lederer, Discoveries, 20.
reminded them whose world they were entering. Lederer’s guides could point out paths and locate fords, but the Monacan’s “staffe” and map were small parts of the easily overlooked rituals of permission that often facilitated or blocked Europeans’ entry into Indian lands.

Indians had a wide variety of motivations for traveling with Europeans and for offering their assistance as did the old Monacan. For some, like the captive guides of the sixteenth century, the question of motivation was less important than was coping with the dangers inherent in their plight. But even in these often grim situations, guides found ways to turn their situation to their advantage and adhere to their own values. Some guides, like Manteo, worked with their captors and not only benefited personally but may even have gained protection for their own people. Others, like Turco, used their knowledge and positions as guides to manipulate and deceive their captors. The plight and power of captive guides, and the simple map drawn in the sand by the old Monacan, point out an important irony of the age of exploration and the subsequent expansion of European settlements: so much of the shape of Europeans’ wanderings, and therefore the colonies that grew out of them, were due in significant part to the desires and plans of the Indians who drew the maps or directed the way. Viewed this way, exploration and its effects on colonial geography and development, stemmed not so much from the ambitions of great explorers as from the goals and territorial designs and understandings of the Indians providing geographic information, blocking or allowing access, or heading down the path themselves.

Armed with the best information they could get, Lederer and company set off into the Blue Ridge Mountains. But like many colonial-era trips, differences between
native and European understandings of how best to travel created dissension. The
tensions stemmed from Major Harris's and the Virginia horsemen's "slighting the
Indian's direction." The Virginians were unwilling to structure their own travel
according to the geographical dictates of an Indian. Although Lederer's journal does not
clarify whether "his companions" voiced their disregard directly to the Monacan's face or
not, they were certainly not the only travelers to prefer their own ways to those of others.
From selecting the members of an expedition to determining its course and eventual ends,
Indians and Europeans squabbled over the mechanics and goals of common travel. In this
case, Harris and the cavaliers insisted that the party shape "their course by the compass,"
the means of navigation that imposed a comforting rationalized order on travel, while
allowing the Englishmen to differentiate themselves from their Indian companions in an
unfamiliar setting where it counted most.

But as they all were soon to learn, there were difficulties inherent in following the
compass's magnetic dictates over the topography's craggy realities. "Due west" they
headed but as Lederer lamented,

"it fell out with us, as it does with those Land-Crabs, that crawling backwards
in a direct line, avoid the Trees that stand in their way, climbing over their very
tops, come down again on the other side, and so after a days labour gain not above
two foot of ground." The results of a few days "obstinately pursuing a due west course" were diminished
supplies and horses beaten "quite off the hoof." Soon Harris and the mounted men
wanted to turn back to the tidewater and even "offered violence" to Lederer when he

414 Ibid.
insisted that his commission obligated them to move on. In the end, the party separated, with all returning east except Lederer, a Susquehanock guide named Jackzetavon, and the bag of parched corn meal Lederer had been ridiculed for bringing along. Like the Pierre Espirit Radisson and his brother-in-law in their travel with inexperienced Frenchmen, Lederer was one of those Europeans who, in practice and in literary self-fashioning, preferred to portray himself as an experienced traveler in the Indian mode. In so doing, Lederer created a self-identity that melded elements of Indian practice with his own German, English, and Virginia background. The parched corn and commission in his possession were both tangible reminders of how travelers cobbled together identities from melanges of the novel and the familiar.

Lederer and his party confronted a commonplace problem in the social dimensions of Indian-European travel: whose rules to follow. At each turn in the road or new river to cross, travel companions often confronted not just the obstacle itself but the conflict inherent in choosing one course of action over another. The resulting conflicts touched on questions of leadership within a given travel party, the different meanings travel partners could place on what at one level was the same problem, and the value and efficacy of different solutions.

But these conflicts were often about more than the discrete problem at hand. The trail’s choices and obstacles provided travelers with an objective test through which to gauge the quality of travel companions, their habits, and worldviews. In this way, the trail was the place where Indians and Europeans could constantly probe the edges of each

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415 Ibid.
416 Ibid.
other’s methods and ideologies, and from those experiences redraw the ever-changing boundaries which individuals used to define themselves and others.

The image of Lederer and Jackzetavon’s setting off westward together on that June day in 1660 is a fitting image with which to conclude a study of travel companions. As was true of so much colonial-era travel, native assistance on many levels facilitated European exploration. Lederer and Jackzetavon’s common travel was a result of both cooperation and conflict. As we have seen so often in previous chapters, the meeting of common travel and documentation took place at the edges of European settlement where Indian country and European interest converged. Although the two travelers came from different societies and held different worldviews, the trail was a place where both could encounter and explore not just the landscape but others and themselves.
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