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A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade

Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hamell

> Metaphor is largely in use among these Peoples; unless you accustom yourself to it, you will understand nothing.
>
> —Paul le Jeune, New France, 1636

In a 1982 *Newsweek* article, a Nicaraguan, commenting on the caliber of Soviet military and economic support, complained that "the Russians treat us like Indians . . . they give us a few mirrors and trinkets."[1] This former Sandinista's complaint illustrates both Western culture's low estimation of "mirrors and trinkets" and its assumption of Indian naiveté. The result of both has been a literarily satisfying but wholly inaccurate view of the role of "baubles, bangles, and beads" in Indian-white contact relations.

Of course, the historical record is full of references to the Indians' attraction to "trinkets." At Narragansett Bay in 1524, Florentine navigator Giovanni de Verrazzano noted the high value that the Indians placed on wrought copper because of its red color and observed that they cared not for, nor valued, implements of steel and iron. Verrazzano also stated that of "those things which we gave them, they prized most highly the bells, azure crystals, and other toys to hang in their ears and about their necks." Nor was that enthusiastic response to European glass beads, copper bells, and other such goods an isolated incident. In Virginia, John Smith noted that the Indians were "generally covetous of copper, beads, & such like trash." Elsewhere we are told of bargaining between Smith and Powhatan, "who fixed his humor upon a few blew beads," and that "for a pound or two of blew beads he [Smith] brought over my king for 2 or 300 bushels of corne, yet parted good friends."[2]

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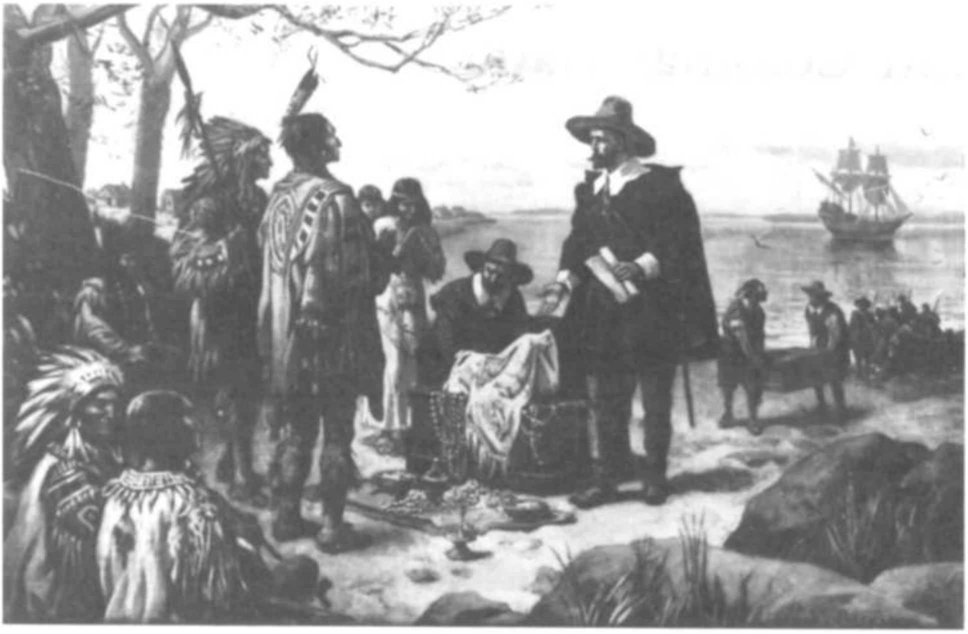
[1] James LeMoyne with John Walcott, "An End to the Covert War?" *Newsweek*, Nov. 29, 1982, p. 65.

[2] Henry C. Murphy, *The Voyage of Verrazzano: A Chapter in the Early History of Maritime Discovery in America*



Purchase of Manhattan, by Alfred Fredericks, c. 1910.
Courtesy Ticor Title Guarantee Company–New York.

The cultural assumptions reflected in those observations continue to inform American popular culture and lie at the base of many persisting stereotypes concerning Indian rationality and motivation. For example, it is difficult to think about colonial-era Indian-white contact without envisioning Peter Minuit's buying Manhattan Island for twenty-four dollars' worth of costume jewelry. That this sort of imagery predominates in the "popular mind" is merely unfortunate; what is tragic is that the same misimpressions (albeit in a less cartoon-like form) seem to be held by those whose profession it is to educate the public.

In a recent essay concerning the treatment of Indians in American history textbooks, Frederick E. Hoxie pointed out that in all those books the authors "either ignore Indian motives completely, or Native Americans appear in the narrative as irrational primitives clinging tenaciously to a doomed way of life." Not discussed in his essay is the fact that this is an accurate reflection of the way in which Indians are treated in most historical literature. It would be difficult, for example, to go much further in ignoring Indian motivation than did Frederick Jackson Turner when he reduced their role to that of a "consolidating agent in *our* history," a perspective adopted by subsequent generations of American-frontier historians.[3] When

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(New York, 1875), 178; John Smith, *A Map of Virginia, With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government, and Religion* (Oxford, Eng., 1612), 20; W. S., *The Proceedings of the English Colonie in Virginia Since Their First Beginning From England in Yeare of Our Lord 1606, Till This Present 1612, With All Their Accidents That Befell Them on Their Journies and Discoveries* (Oxford, Eng., 1612), 42, 20.

[3] Frederick E. Hoxie, "The Indians versus the Textbooks: Is There Any Way Out?" *Perspectives*, 23 (April 1985),

motivation is addressed at all, Indians appear to be psychotic: either the violent paranoid savages who skulk through Francis Parkman's and similar works or the sweetly schizophrenic innocents arrested in permanent infancy who occupy Helen Hunt Jackson's and others' pages.[4] (It is difficult to decide which is worse, denying Indians volition or endowing them with irrationality.)

To make matters worse, the broad acceptance of Indian (and other aboriginal) insanity spawned a vast literature ranging from Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* through Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's various writings up to Carlos Castaneda's psychedelic "insights," in which "primitivism" is characterized as a category of thinking universal among nonwestern (tribal or traditional) peoples.[5] Thus not only are Indians irrational, but also their irrationality is directly related to their "primitiveness," which can be traced either to their geographical remoteness from "civilization," to some cultural impediment, or to racial inferiority.[6] This perspective has fed back into literature, leading to ever greater heights of absurdity, an extreme example of which might be Ruth Beebe Hill's *Hanta Yo*.[7]

Understandably, many historians and anthropologists have rebelled against the image of Indians either as psychotically hostile savages or as gullible children, and much of the current literature on the subject of early Indian-white contact either denies the significance (and occasionally the very existence) of an exchange of "nonutilitarian" items or is simply silent on the subject—emphasizing, instead, the practicality of Indian economic behavior and showing that, far from being gullible, Indians were demanding and sophisticated consumers.[8] Thus Indians have been

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20; Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Turner Thesis concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, ed. George Rogers Taylor (Lexington, Mass., 1972), 12 [emphasis added].

[4] Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac and The Indian War after the Conquest of Canada* (rev. ed., 2 vols., Boston, 1870); Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York, 1881). For assessments of Francis Parkman's work, see, for example, Francis P. Jennings, "Francis Parkman: A Brahmin among the Untouchables," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 42 (July 1985), 305–28; Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier* (New York, 1972), 83–93; and Robert Shulman, "Parkman's Indians and American Violence," *Massachusetts Review*, 12 (Spring 1971), 221–39. On Helen Hunt Jackson's work, see, for example, John R. Byers and Elizabeth S. Byers, "Helen Hunt Jackson (1830–1885): A Critical Bibliography of Secondary Comment," *American Literary Realism 1870–1910*, 6 (Summer 1973), 197–241; and Allan Nevins, "Helen Hunt Jackson, Sentimentalist vs. Realist," *American Scholar*, 10 (Summer 1941), 269–85. For an overview of the "good Indian-bad Indian" mythic structure, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York, 1978), 27–29, 95–96, 106–107.

[5] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A. A. Brill (1918; reprint, New York, 1960); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London, 1923); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London, 1923); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *The "Soul" of the Primitive*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (1928; reprint, New York, 1966); Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1968).

[6] Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, 33–71. Carlos Castaneda is rather different from either Sigmund Freud or Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in that he celebrates rather than denegrates Indian "primitiveness." As Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., points out, "White views of Indians are inextricably bound up with the evaluation of their own society and culture," so that while Castaneda may be different in his perspective, he is participating in the same general process. *Ibid.*, 27.

[7] Ruth Beebe Hill, *Hanta Yo: An American Saga* (Garden City, 1979).

[8] Arthur J. Ray's work is perhaps most representative. See Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto, 1980), 255–71; and Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870* (Toronto, 1974).

casuistically lifted out of "primitivism" and firmly established as "rational," economic beings in the European sense. Perhaps the best illustration of this sort of casuistry is the work of Francis Jennings, who stresses repeatedly the utilitarian motives of Indians in "intersocietal commerce" and consistently denies the significance of nonutilitarian items in the trade.[9] In his most recent offering, Jennings accuses those who have tried to come to grips with the ideological aspects of Indian trade relations of reviving "savagery mythology." In fact, Jennings refuses to acknowledge such "savages," contemptuously calling the Indians in these works "hantayoyos."[10]

While such analysis may be ideologically satisfying (and has, perhaps, served as a necessary corrective), it simply does not hold up under close scrutiny. Both the historical and the archaeological records indicate that the impact of early European utilitarian trade goods on practical subsistence was negligible.[11] Summarizing the archaeological literature, John Witthoft concluded that utilitarian items played almost no role in the Indian trade during the sixteenth century; that "steel table knives and steel axes are present but not abundant, and brass was known, but kettles were still cut up rather than used as cooking utensils." Similar findings forced Bruce G. Trigger to concede that the real catalyst for the extensive changes in Huron social, political, and exchange relationships during the protohistoric period was apparently "a few scraps of metal," primarily ornaments crafted from pieces of broken copper kettles.[12] Hence Indians were not acquiring European goods primarily for what Europeans would have considered practical reasons during the early stages of intercultural contact. From the early stages through the seventeenth century, utilitarian items were increasingly being acquired and were being used in European fashion, but such nonutilitarian commodities as glass beads continued to be traded in huge volume.[13]

This pushes us toward the conclusion that despite Jennings's and others' protestations to the contrary, pre- and protohistoric American Indians did not think of the trade in the same way that Europeans did. As Wilcomb E. Washburn has said, "When Europeans first met Indians, the exchange of goods that took place bore almost no relation to the economic process with which we are familiar." More recently Calvin Martin observed that "their ideals and mode of action, phenomenology, on-

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See also John C. McManus, "An Economic Analysis of Indian Behavior in the North American Fur Trade," *Journal of Economic History*, 32 (March 1972), 36–53.

[9] The best overall summary of the problems inherent in Francis P. Jennings's writing is Calvin Martin, "The Covenant Chain of Friendship, Inc.: America's First Great Real Estate Agency," *Reviews in American History*, 13 (March 1985), 14–20.

[10] Francis P. Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York, 1984), 81, xix. See also Francis P. Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York, 1975).

[11] Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (2 vols., Montreal, 1976), I, 243–45; John Witthoft, "Archaeology as a Key to the Colonial Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 40 (Winter 1966), 205. See also James E. Fitting, "Patterns of Acculturation at the Straits of Mackinac," in *Cultural Change and Continuity: Essays in Honor of James Bennett Griffin*, ed. Charles E. Cleland (New York, 1976), 331; and William A. Ritchi, *Dutch Hollow, an Early Historic Period Seneca Site in Livingston County, New York* (Rochester, N.Y., 1954), 2.

[12] Witthoft, "Archaeology as a Key to the Colonial Fur Trade," 205; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, I, 245.

[13] Witthoft, "Archaeology as a Key to the Colonial Fur Trade," 205–207; Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts: The Northern Colonial Frontier, 1748–1763* (Lincoln, 1966); Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 79–85.

tology, and epistemology differed radically from that of Europeans then and Westerners now. We know this from ethnohistorical inquiry." Emphatically, we are not attempting to resurrect Lévy-Bruhl's timeless "primitives." We are, instead, in complete agreement with Claude Lévi-Strauss's statement:

> Of course, so-called primitive societies belong in history; their past is as old as ours, since it goes back to the origin of the species. Over thousands of years, they have undergone all sorts of transformations, gone through periods of crisis and prosperity; they have known wars, migrations, adventure. But they have specialized in ways different from those we have chosen. They may have remained, in some respects, close to very ancient conditions of life. This is not to deny that, in other respects, they are farther from them than we are.[14]

This being the case, we must be wary of casting Indian cultural processes in European cultural terms.[15]

Thus to deny or to underplay the role of what Jennings calls "gimcracks and baubles" in Indian-white trade relations is both theoretically inappropriate and historically inaccurate. If we are going to address Indian motivation (as we believe we must), it becomes necessary to explain the Indians' desire for those "baubles, bangles, and beads" of Western Civilization. The explanation must satisfy the demand of being "rational" within the cultural milieu of American Indian societies and at the same time must avoid the all too common tautological device of simply defining such items as "luxury," "prestige," and "status" goods, thus inherently valuable and desirable. Moreover, we must be equally wary of the pitfall of which Jennings warns us—that of reviving the image of Indians as savages, noble or otherwise.[16]

Our analysis of historical, archaeological, ethnographic, and psychological materials has led us to what we believe is a valid hypothesis. It would appear that during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Indians did not perceive European copper or glass as something new. Rather, imported copper goods and glasswares were assimilated into traditional native ideological systems alongside native copper, exotic siliceous stones, and shells as material components of great ritual significance.[17] It was that conventional but highly charged ideological value, not some Indian psychosis, that made European trade goods so enormously attractive.

The formation of this hypothesis came as a direct result of observing archaeological artifacts from the Woodland region of the proto- and early historic periods.[18] Here we find trade goods directly alongside spiritually charged native items in ceremonial contexts. This incorporation of novel materials is readily apparent in protohistoric Iroquois mortuary practices, in which glass beads appear to have been preferentially disposed along with shell beads. In protohistoric and early historic Seneca burials, glass beads are sometimes found with quartzite pebbles in box turtle rattles. Playing pieces for the Plumstone Bowl or dice game made from the "raspberry" prunts of a glass drinking vessel and from white-glazed majolica and delft fragments have been found at seventeenth-century Seneca sites, and a Seneca child wore the foot of another glass drinking vessel suspended on a brass chain. Additionally, majolica and delft fragments have been found reworked into small circular gorgets and pendants, analogues of more traditional shell fragments. In all of these cases, the new materials were incorporated with similar traditional materials into a shared ceremonial context.[19]

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[14] Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Symbol, Utility, and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade," *Minnesota History*, 40 (Winter 1966), 198; Martin, "Covenant Chain of Friendship, Inc.," 20; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology: Volume II*, trans. Monique Layton (Chicago, 1976), 28.

[15] For a clear statement of this problem in a comprehensive and insightful study, see Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504–1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (rev. ed., Toronto, 1969), 47. More recently, both Calvin Martin and Bruce G. Trigger have again called to our attention the problems of attempting to understand native acculturative processes solely from a Western cultural perspective. Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," *Ethnohistory*, 26 (Spring 1979), 153–59; Bruce G. Trigger, "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian," *American Antiquity*, 45 (Oct. 1980), 662–76.

[16] Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 99; Jennings, *Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, 81.

[17] In this discussion the term "shell" includes both freshwater and marine univalves and bivalves and pearls. The term "crystal" includes quartz crystal and other siliceous minerals, especially light-colored transparent and translucent varieties. For the sake of brevity, we are subsuming all metals found in a free state (for example, silver and meteoric iron) or as reflective metallic ores (for example, pyrite and galena) under the term "native copper."

In the historical record for eastern North America, we find evidence that "glass" entered native thought and behavior as "crystal." In 1699 a "bottle and the foot of a glass which they guarded as very precious" were observed in a Taënsa temple, which also had preserved within it some pieces of native crystal. Among the furnishings of a Bayogoula temple was "a double glass bottle . . . which Tonti had given these people." Glasswares and glazed European ceramics were among the Tunica's "treasures" placed with the dead during the early eighteenth century, and Reo F. Fortune noted that in this century a clear glass marble is used in the "shooting" rituals of the Omaha Siouans' Water Monster Society, perhaps replacing quartz crystals.[20]

Further archaeological and linguistic information confirms that glass was also incorporated into the native thought-world as a replacement for traditional divining implements. Traditionally, water and crystal were widely used for such purposes, as were polished free-state metals, metallic-ore mosaics, muscovite mica, and perhaps water- or grease-slicked polished stone surfaces, in which a spirit or soul was reflected.[21] In 1643 Roger Williams noted that the Narragansett Algonquians' word

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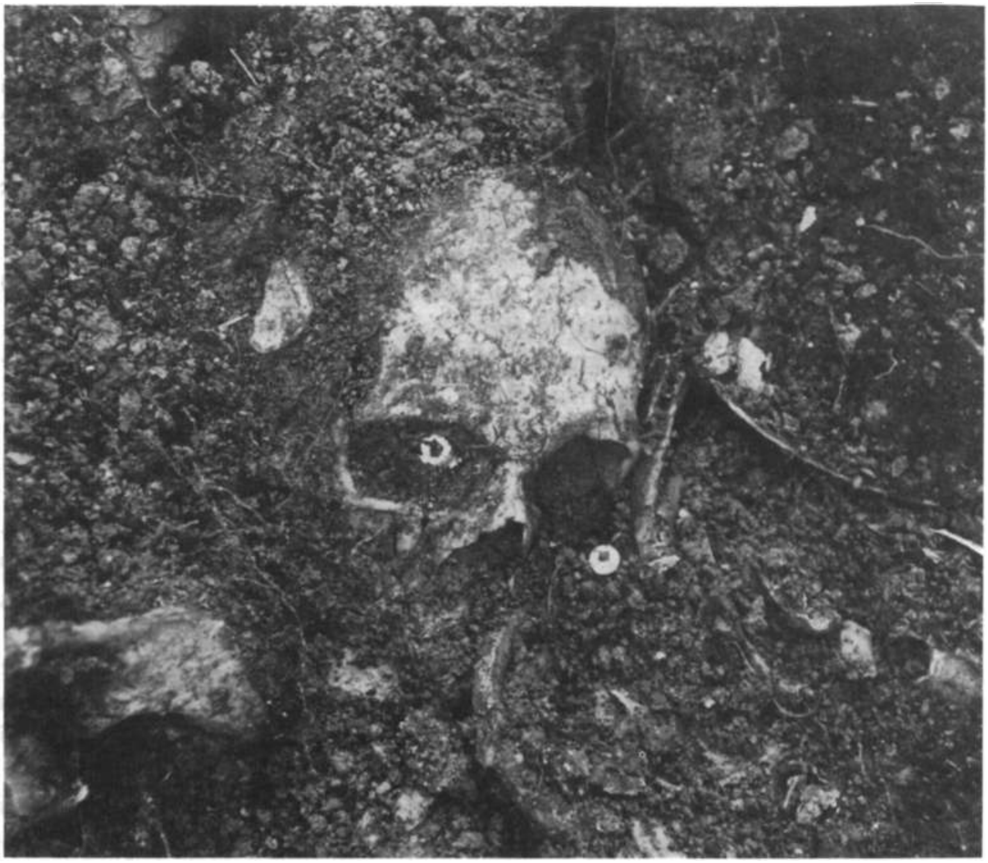
[18] The following discussion is confined to the Woodland Algonquians, Siouans, and Iroquois and their trade contact with whites during the colonial era. We believe, however, that similar symbolic interpretations were made of European trade items by all Indian (and, perhaps by all traditional) groups and that without an analysis of the symbolic categories into which European goods (and people) were received, the history of contact must suffer from the sort of distortion discussed above.

[19] Witthoft, "Archaeology as a Key to the Colonial Fur Trade," 205–208; Charles F. Wray and Harry L. Schoff, "A Preliminary Report on the Seneca Sequence in Western New York, 1550–1687," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, 23 (July 1953), 53–63; Robert Graham and Charles F. Wray, "The Percentage of Recovery in Salvaging Beads from Disturbed Burials," *Bulletin of the New York State Archaeological Association*, 23 (Nov. 1961), 15. See also George R. Hamell, "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads: Another Perspective upon Indian-European Contact in Northeastern North America," in *Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference*, ed. Charles F. Hayes III et al. (Rochester, N.Y., 1983), 48–49.

[20] John R. Swanton, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Mississippi Valley and Adjacent Coast of the Gulf of Mexico* (Washington, 1911), 164, 269, 275; John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Washington, 1946), 618; Jeffrey P. Brain et al., *Tunica Treasure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), passim; Reo F. Fortune, *Omaha Secret Societies* (New York, 1932), 90.

[21] John Bartram, *Travels in Pensilvania and Canada* (1751; reprint, Ann Arbor, 1966), 33; Charles G. Leland, *The Algonquian Legends of New England; or, Myths and Folklore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes* (Boston, 1884), 284; Silas Tertius Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs* (New York, 1894), 3; Erminnie A. Smith,



Skull with white shell-bead eye inlays. Blackduck culture, c. A.D. 1200.
Burial excavation, Hungry Hall site, Rainey Lake District, Ontario, Canada.
Courtesy Royal Ontario Museum.

for soul had an affinity "with a word signifying a looking glasse, a cleare resemblance." Nearly three hundred years later, in his study of the Naskapi Algonquians, Frank G. Speck observed that the same linguistic and conceptual linkage between "soul" and "mirror" was found over much of the Algonquian-speaking area of North America.[22] Clearly in both cases, European-manufactured mirrors were incorporated into an already existing category, one highly charged with ceremonial significance.

"Myths of the Iroquois," in *Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1880–'81* (Washington, 1883), 68–69; Frank G. Speck, *Naskapi: The Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula* (1935; reprint, Norman, 1977), 164–65; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610–1791* (73 vols., Cleveland, 1896–1901), VIII, 123; Arthur C. Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales* (Buffalo, 1923), 267–68; Alanson B. Skinner, "Mascoutens or Prairie Potawatomi Indians: Part III—Mythology and Folklore," *Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee*, 6 (Jan. 1927), 343.

[22] J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., "A Key into the Language of America," in *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (7 vols., New York, 1963), I, 154; Speck, *Naskapi*, 33, 250.

Any number of further examples could be given to illustrate the transubstantiation of European-manufactured items into native American artifacts, all of which point to the fact that the key to understanding early trade relations between whites and Indians is the realization that to the Indians nonutilitarian trade goods were valuable, *not* for their uniqueness, but for their similarity to native substances. These materials were incorporated with native shells, crystals, and metals into ceremonial objects possessing great ideological and symbolic meaning.

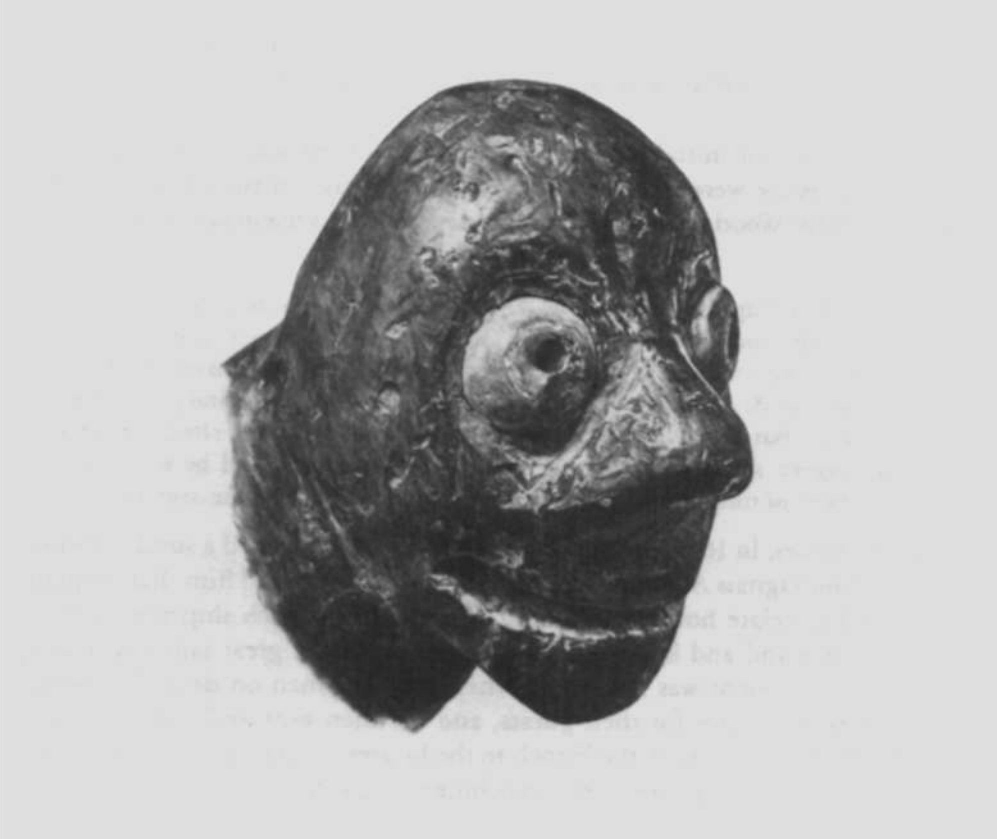
As interesting as that may be, more significant is the implication that the perceived similarity between novel items and familiar ones permitted the Woodland Indians to incorporate, not just the trade goods, but also the people who bore them. Through that process of conventionalization, Indians were able to understand colonial cultural contact, a process that otherwise would have been exceedingly disturbing, perhaps incomprehensible. This implication opens a door to a new and, we believe, much more constructive way of analyzing the acculturation of European goods and European people into the native American world.

In both the Old World and the New, crystals and shells were highly valued aesthetically. In the Old World the manufacture of glass and porcelain was developed to produce substances imitative of rock or quartz crystal and other precious stones and of shell. In western Europe during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, glasswares imitated "cristallo," and the shell-like whiteness and luster of Oriental porcelains were imitated in white, or "milk," glass. Similarly, European potters produced ersatz porcelain with its shell-like color and luster in white-glazed majolica, faience, and delft.[23]

North American Indians also valued the luster and reflective quality of crystal and shell, but they did not reproduce those items synthetically. In fact, the idea would have been unthinkable to Indians since those things were believed to be "other-worldly" in origin. In the Woodland Indian mythic world, crystal, shell, and reflective metals were obtained by real human man-beings through reciprocal exchanges with extremely powerful Other World Grandfathers, man-beings of horned or antlered serpent, panther, and dragon forms. The Other World Grandfathers were related to humans as personal guardian spirits or as patrons of animal-medicine societies, and their gifts often assured long life, physical and spiritual well-being, and success, especially in the conceptually related activities of hunting, fishing, warfare, and courtship. Consequently, those substances were prominent in myths and in rituals of creation and re-creation, resuscitation, and the continuity of life. On the other hand, as other-worldly items, those substances were charged with great power and were also potentially very dangerous to the real human man-beings who came to possess them. Thus Indians developed an ingenious and highly ritualized technology for incorporating real shell, crystal, and native copper into ceremonially significant artifacts and surrounded it with a rich mythic tradition.[24]

[23] Corning Museum of Glass, *Glass from the Corning Museum of Glass: A Guide to the Collections* (Corning, 1974). See also Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, trans. and ed. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (2 vols., Toronto, 1974–1977), I, 309; and Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, VIII, 312.

[24] On the origin, use, and significance of other-worldly charms, especially sacred shells, crystals ("white flint,"



Human head effigy from a clay smoking pipe with red glass-bead eye inlays.
Seneca Iroquois, c. A.D. 1655–1675. Excavation, Dann site, Monroe County, New York.
Drawing by Gene Mackay; photograph by Jack Williams.
Courtesy Rochester Museum and Science Center.

It is not too surprising, then, that when delft, glass, and other European items that were deliberately imitative of natural lustrous minerals were introduced into North America, they were received into native semantic categories as "crystal" and "shell" and were used as such. To the Indians, however, the similarity of appearance

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"white stone," and so on), and native copper, see C. Marius Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology, with an Appendix Containing Earlier Published Records* (Ottawa, 1915), 102–103, 108–109, 140–41; Jeremiah Curtin and J. N. B. Hewitt, "Seneca Fiction, Legends, and Myths," in *Thirty-second Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1910–1911* (Washington, 1918), 336–37; Walter Pilkington, ed., *The Journals of Samuel Kirkland: 18th Century Missionary to the Iroquois, Government Agent, Father of Hamilton College* (Clinton, N.Y., 1980), 141; Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, LI, 183; Victor Barnouw, *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths & Tales and Their Relations to Chippewa Life: Based on Folktales Collected by Victor Barnouw, Joseph B. Casagrande, Ernestine Friedl, and Robert E. Ritzenthaler* (Madison, 1977), 133; Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Archives of Aboriginal Knowledge. Containing All the Original Papers Laid Before Congress Respecting the History, Antiquities, Language, Ethnology, Pictography, Rites, Superstitions, and Mythology, of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (6 vols., Philadelphia, 1860), I, 352, 418; Paul Radin and A. B. Reagan, "Ojibwa Myths and Tales," *Journal of American Folk-lore*, 41 (Jan.-Feb. 1928), 145–46; and J. G. Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Wanderings Round Lake Superior* (1860; reprint, Minneapolis, 1956), 208.

was greatly reinforced by a putative similarity in origin. Like the traditional ceremonial items, European wares initially also appeared other-worldly. Thus the objects and their bearers were entirely consistent with familiar aspects of the aboriginal world.

Indian accounts of initial contact give evidence for the way in which European artifacts and people were received by Woodland Indians. In the early seventeenth century, William Wood recorded a New England Indian version according to which the natives

> tooke the first Ship they saw for a walking Iland, the Mast to be a Tree, the Saile white Clouds, and the discharging of Ordinance for Lightning and Thunder, which did much trouble them, but this thunder being over, and this moving Iland stedied with an Anchor, they manned out their cannowes and goe and picke strawberries there, but being saluted by the way with a broad side, they cried out, what much hoggery, so bigge walke, and so bigge speak, and by and by kill; which caused them to turne back, not daring to approach till they were sent for.[25]

One year earlier, in 1633, Jesuit pioneer Paul le Jeune recorded a similar tradition among the Montagnais Algonquians. Le Jeune's informant told him that his grandmother used to relate how they thought that the first French ship they had seen was a floating island and knew not what to say about the great sails that made it go. Their astonishment was redoubled when they saw men on deck. The women began to prepare houses for their guests, and the men ventured out in canoes to board the vessel and to invite the French to the houses. In general, the Indians were much astonished, saying that "the Frenchmen drank blood and ate wood, thus naming the wine and the biscuits."[26]

About 1761 the Rev. John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary to the Indians of Pennsylvania, was given an account by "aged and respected Delawares, Momeys and Mahicanni" of the first Europeans' arrival at Manhattan Island. Their ancestors had originally mistaken the Europeans' approaching ship as a large fish, but as it got closer they concluded "it to be a large canoe or house, in which the great Mannitto (great or Supreme being) *himself* was, and that he probably was coming to visit them." Sacrifices, food, and entertainment were prepared for him. The tradition also recorded that their ancestors admired the white skins of the men who landed on shore in a small boat, particularly that of the man in "red clothes which shone" who gave them presents, "to wit, beads, axes, hoes, stockings &c." The Europeans then departed, promising to return the following year. Meanwhile, not knowing their utilitarian functions, the Indians suspended the axes and hoes on their breasts as ornaments and used the stockings as tobacco pouches. It was not until the following year, when the ship returned, that the Indians were taught the practical functions of these objects by the greatly amused Europeans.[27]

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[25] William Wood, *New England prospect. A true, lively and experimental description of that part of America, commonly called New England* (1634; reprint, New York, 1967), 87.

[26] Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, V, 119–21.

[27] John Heckewelder, "Indian Tradition of the First Arrival of the Dutch at Manhattan Island, Now New York," in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society* (2d ser., 4 vols., New York, 1841), I, 71–74.

In 1869 Silas Tertius Rand recorded a Micmac Algonquian tradition of their initial contact with Europeans, which firmly ties this event to the supernatural bearers of other-worldly ceremonial gifts. According to Rand's informant, at a time when only the Indians lived in North America, a young woman had had a singular dream "that a small island came floating in towards the land, with tall trees on it, and living beings—among whom was a man dressed in rabbit-skin garments." Within two days the event had occurred; the island had drifted toward the shore and then become stationary. There were trees on it, branches on the trees, and bears crawling about the branches. At first the Indians seized their bows and arrows and spears and ran down to the shore, intending to shoot the bears. But then they recognized that the "bears" were really men, and that among them was a man "dressed in white,—a priest with his white stole on." The girl was later questioned by the tribal magicians and affirmed that the ship was the island of her dream and that the priest was, indeed, the man in rabbit skins. This tale and others collected among the Micmac during the last half of the nineteenth century indicate that Europeans, especially priests, had become associated with the Woodland Algonquians' culture hero, Mahtigwess, the White Rabbit Man-being.[28]

Similarly, Verrazzano described how one of his sailors in a small boat, which was unable to beach because of the high surf, attempted to swim ashore in order to convey to the Indians there "some knick-knacks, as little bells, looking-glasses, and other like trifles; when he came near three or four of them he tossed the things to them, and turned about to get back to the boat, but he was thrown over by the waves, and so dashed by them that he lay as if he were dead upon the beach." To the sailor's great distress, the Indians picked him up and carried him from the surf, showing him that he had nothing to fear. "Afterwards they laid him down at the foot of a little hill, when they took off his shirt and trowsers, and examined him, expressing the greatest astonishment at the whiteness of his skin."[29]

We do not wish to imply here that the stories are "true" in an objective sense. Rather, they are a reflection of how those societies chose to incorporate novel historical events into their cognitive world. In this sense, these traditions, like those told concerning Capt. James Cook's arrival on the Sandwich Islands, are instances of what Marshall D. Sahlins describes as a "received category"—a conjunction of historical metaphors and mythical realities.[30] Through that process the nonrational becomes rational—the unknown is made known. Hence a totally unknown creature—a priest—was conceptually transformed into a supernatural, but very familiar, white rabbit man-being; and an incomprehensible beast—a sailor—was perceived as a marvelous, but entirely understandable, white-skinned monster man-being from the sea. Similarly, when confronted with magical "walking islands," the Indians interviewed by Wood naturally assumed that they could venture out and "pick strawberries" and were, no doubt, rewarded with metaphorical ones.

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[28] Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs,* 225–26; Bailey, *Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures,* 174–75.

[29] Murphy, *Voyage of Verrazzano,* 173–74.

[30] Marshall D. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor 1981), 7.

A linguistic and conceptual correlation between beads and berries added greatly to the conventionalization of European trade items and their identification as otherworldly, in that berries were frequently associated with a supernatural mythic and ritual motif.[31] According to Seneca legend, strawberries were not native to the earth but had been brought from the Sky World by Sky Woman and were still to be found along the road to the afterworld. Similarly, the Chippewa-Ojibway Algonquians believed that strawberries were among the most prominent features along the road to the spirit world. In fact, berries were widely recognized as a proper food for spirits.[32] Thus, like crystal, shell, and native copper, berries were associated with the other world and with the supernatural beings who dwelt there.

As other-worldly things, berries shared shell, crystal, and native copper's efficacy in promoting physical and spiritual well-being. According to the Huron genesis myth, the Master of the Sky World caused the celestial tree of light and life to be cut down so that he could eat of the fruit and thereby cure a sickness afflicting his soul. Evidence of fruit as a curative among the Huron was apparent in 1637, when a fasting Huron sorcerer was reportedly taught to cure the sick by "demons" who advised him to live as they did on a diet of clear strawberry soup.[33] Such beliefs were also widespread among the Northern Iroquois, who credited berries with the power to cure the seriously ill, both in myth and in practice.[34] Given such power, it is not surprising that berries are specifically mentioned in the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address that opens most ceremonies and in which thanks are offered to the life-supporting beings on earth and above. Here they are called "hanging fruits," signifying the liminal position they occupy between earth and sky and reflecting their symbolic liminality in Woodland ceremonial life.[35] Since beads were linguistically and conceptually associated with berries, when shell, crystal, and native copper were rendered into beads, these substances became metaphorical berries. Hence the items became exponentially more powerful in that they were berries but were also shell, crystal, and native copper.

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[31] References to the linguistic or conceptual identity of berries and beads have been reported for the Abnaki, Chippewa-Ojibwa, Montagnais-Naskapi, Menominee, Proto-Algonquian, and Cherokee. Frank G. Speck, *The Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkian* (Lancaster, Pa., 1919), 54; Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (Washington, 1929), 15, 22, 35, 191; Speck, *Naskapi*, 28, 199–200, 247–48; Alanson B. Skinner, *Medicine Ceremony of the Menomini, Iowa, and Wahpeton Dakota, with Notes on the Ceremony among the Ponca, Bungi Ojibwa, and Potawatomi* (New York, 1920), 45, 179; George F. Aubin, *A Proto-Algonquian Dictionary* (Ottawa, 1975), 154; James Mooney, "The Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee," in *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1885–'86* (Washington, 1891), 393; James A. Mooney, *The Swimmer Manuscript: Cherokee Sacred Formulas and Medicinal Prescriptions*, ed. Frans M. Olbrechts (Washington, 1932), 11, 393; Frans M. Olbrechts, "Some Cherokee Methods of Divination," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third International Congress of Americanists, Held at New York, September 17–22, 1928* (New York, 1930), 548.

[32] Jesse J. Cornplanter, *Legends of the Longhouse* (Philadelphia, 1938), 7; Arthur C. Parker, *The Code of Handsome Lake: The Seneca Prophet* (Albany, 1913), 25; Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians; With Especial Reference to Their Conversion to Christianity* (1861; reprint, New York, 1970), 103; William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibways, Based Upon Traditions and Oral Statements* (1885; reprint, Minneapolis, 1970), 73; Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami*, 223; William Jones and Truman Michelson, *Ojibwa Texts* (New York, 1919), 311; W. J. Hoffman, "The Midē'wiwin or 'Grand Medicine Society' of the Ojibway," in *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*, 280; Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 75; Curtin and Hewitt, "Seneca Fiction, Legends and Myths," 571; Parker, *Code of Handsome Lake*, 25.

[33] Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, X, 129, XIII, 227–331.

[34] Parker, *Seneca Myths and Folk Tales*, 203, 326; Parker, *Code of Handsome Lake*, 24–25; David Boyle, *Archeological Report [for] 1898. Being Part of an Appendix to the Report of the Minister of Education, Ontario* (Toronto, 1898), 139–40; Harold Blau, "Notes on the Onondaga Bowl Game," in *Iroquois Culture, History, and Prehistory*, ed. Elisabeth Tooker (Albany, 1967), 35–49.

In addition even to those qualities, all such other-worldly gifts had a specific symbolic association that was conveyed by the objects' color. Extensive cross-cultural research on color coding has led linguists Brent Berlin and Paul Kay to three conclusions concerning that cognitive process:

> First, there exist universally for humans eleven basic perceptual color categories, which serve as the psychophysical referents of the eleven or fewer basic color terms in any language. Second, in the history of a given language, encoding of perceptual categories into basic color terms follows a fixed partial order. . . . Third, the overall temporal order is properly considered an evolutionary one; color lexicons with few terms tend to occur in association with complex cultures and complex technologies (to the extent that complexity of culture and technology can be assessed objectively).

This evolutionary pattern follows the order:

1. All languages contain terms for white and black.
2. If a language contains three terms, then it contains a term for red.
3. If a language contains four terms, then it contains a term for either green or yellow (but not both).
4. If a language contains five terms, then it contains terms for both green and yellow.
5. If a language contains six terms, then it contains a term for blue.
6. If a language contains seven terms, then it contains a term for brown.
7. If a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for purple, pink, orange, grey, or some combination of these.[36]

This may seem a throwback to Lévy-Bruhl's and others' social Darwinism, but it is not necessary to agree with Berlin and Kay's evolutionary scheme. Instead, Sahlins's suggestion that the basic color "Stage" is a reflection of the conceptual relationships within a perceptual system, that it is a function of cultural choice, not of linguistic or cultural retardation, seems more likely. One might also follow Marc H. Bornstein in asserting that these categories are dependent on biological differences in iris pigmentation.[37] Whatever the case, in the Woodland Indian ceremonial perceptual system, conceptual relationships were tripartite; therefore, the ritual language of Woodland Indian groups falls into category two, or Stage II, dividing basic color conceptions and their symbolic associations into three essential categories: white, black, and red.[38]

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[35] See Michael K. Foster, *From the Earth to Beyond the Sky: An Ethnographic Approach to Four Longhouse Iroquois Speech Events* (Ottawa, 1974), 60–62, 120–27, 142. For a definition and discussion of "liminality," see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969; reprint, Ithaca, 1977), 95–96.

[36] Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley, 1969), 104, 2–3.

[37] Marshall D. Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," *Semiotica*, 16 (Sommaire 1976), 13; Marc H. Bornstein, "The Influence of Visual Perception on Culture," *American Anthropologist*, 77 (Dec. 1975), 774–98.

As in many cultures, Northeastern Woodland Indians associated light with concepts of greatest cultural and social value.[39] Light was life, light was mind, light was knowledge, and light was greatest being; and semantically related concepts such as brightness, transparency, visibleness, and whiteness were also life, mind, knowledge, and greatest being. Thus other-worldly objects displaying those qualities—some shells and crystals as well as the hair of grandfathers—were associated with the cognitive and social aspects of life, that is, the well-being, harmony, and purposefulness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being. The positive symbolic quality of light colors found ritual expression in many realms, but most obviously in the presentation of a white wampum belt, which conveyed a semantic context of peace, desire for understanding, and sociability for the oral message that accompanied it.[40]

As is commonly the case in Stage I and Stage II language systems, white was also associated with other light colors. Thus as white was life, mind, knowledge, and greatest being, so hues ranging from sky blue—the color of the bright, clear daytime sky—to green—the color of crystal-clear reflecting waters and of growing grasses and leaves—were also life, mind, knowledge, and greatest being and appear to have been interchangeable in most mythic and ritual contexts.[41]

Also common in Stage I and Stage II language systems, the absence of light—darkness—conveys the complement to light and everything it stands for.[42] For traditional Northeastern Indians, darkness, conveyed by black, indigo, or any dark color, stood in contrast to life, mind, knowledge, and greatest being. Thus other-worldly objects displaying that quality—charcoal, some crystals and shells as well as some berries and fruits, the masked faces of rattlesnakes, Canadian jays, some falcons, and the night itself—were associated with the noncognitive and asocial aspects of life: a stark contrast to well-being, harmony, and purposiveness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being, as in death, mourning, and confinement of the womb. As with white, the symbolic quality of blackness found ritual expression in many realms, but again most obvious was the presentation of a "black" (actually dark blue) wampum belt, which conveyed a semantic context of death, mourning, and asociability.[43]

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[38] George S. Snyderman, "The Functions of Wampum," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 98 (Dec. 1954), 475–77.

[39] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 475; Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," 14. See also A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* (Glencoe, Ill., 1948), 316.

[40] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 469–94; George S. Snyderman, "The Function of Wampum in Iroquois Religion," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 105 (Dec. 1961), 571–608; Speck, *Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkian*, 3–71; Frank G. Speck, "The Eastern Algonkian Wabanaki Confederacy," *American Anthropologist*, 17 (July-Sept. 1915), 492–508.

[41] Berlin and Kay, *Basic Color Terms*, 17, 25–28, 52–63; Bornstein, "Influence of Visual Perception on Culture," 774–98. See also Hoffman, "Midē'wiwin," 298; and Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami*, 16, 158.

[42] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 475; Berlin and Kay, *Basic Color Terms*, 17, 25–28, 52–63; Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," 14.

[43] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 469–94; Snyderman, "Function of Wampum in Iroquois Religion," 571–608; Speck, *Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkian*, 3–71; Speck, "Eastern Algonkian Wabanaki Confederacy," 492–508.

It is the presence of a third axis in the division of the cognitive world, symbolized by the color red, that makes Northeastern Woodland Indian ceremonial language a Stage II system. Perceptually, red is a very special color. An effect known as "chromatic aberration" causes red surfaces to seem nearer to an observer than do surfaces of other colors at an equal objective distance. Most important, red maintains its chromatic perceptibility over a range of light conditions broader than that for any other color; red appears brighter than other colors at the same level of saturation and is perceived as purer or more saturated than are other colors of the same brightness. Thus red remains red in the light and in the dark.[44]

Consistent with its chromatic nature, red mediates between light and dark, as the red flames of the fire mediate between day's brightness and night's darkness. Consistent with its intensity, red is associated with animation, emotion, intense experience—with fire, heat, and blood.[45] Among the Woodland Indians otherworldly objects displaying that quality—some crystals, mineral pigments, and native copper—as well as some berries and fruits, red willows, red cedars, and blood were associated with the animation that mediates between light-life and dark-death and with the emotion that mediates between light-cognition and dark-autism. As with both white and black, the symbolic quality of redness found ritual expression in many realms, but again most obvious was the presentation of a red wampum belt, which conveyed a semantic context of high emotion and excitement and the ultimate expression of antisociability: war.[46]

To summarize, whiteness connoted the cognitive aspects of life, redness connoted the emotional aspect of life, and blackness connoted the absence of either cognition or animacy, or both, that is, death, mourning, and other inferior and asocial states of being. Depending on the ritual context, redness could be contrasted with either whiteness or darkness or could serve as a mediator between the two.[47] Thus white, red, and black shell, crystal, and metals had contrasting and complementary functions, values, and meanings in ritual. That color code was pervasively expressed in Northeastern Woodland Indian material culture and was the context into which European trade beads and other "decorative" items were received. Like native items, European beads and metal objects displayed the all-important aesthetic attributes that qualified them for a significant place in the Indian metaphysical world.

Thus the glass beads and other items offered to Indians by early European voyagers were seen as being the other-worldly ceremonial materials traditionally given by creatures different from themselves in appearance, yet related to them in a metaphorical and ceremonial sense. Is it any wonder then that the Indians Verrazzano met treasured gifts of copper and azure crystals or that Powhatan believed that he got a fair bargain in trading 200–300 bushels of corn for "a pound or two of blew beads"? In both their color and form, these items resembled those that had always been received from supernatural beings through reciprocal exchange. The new simply slipped in beside the old. Furthermore, because trade items were overwhelmingly either white, blue, or red in color, the items and the people who bore them were received into familiar social contexts.[48]

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[44] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 477; Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," 4–5.

[45] Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," 14; Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, 1967), 70–71.

[46] Snyderman, "Functions of Wampum," 469–94; Synderman, "Function of Wampum in Iroquois Religion," 571–608; Speck, *Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkian*, 3–71; Speck, "Eastern Algonkian Wabanaki Confederacy," 492–508.

[47] Sahlins, "Colors and Cultures," 14.

It therefore appears to us that Father le Jeune was quite correct; that in the initial phases of intercultural trade relations, the Indians in the Woodland region were trading in metaphors and that the value of trade goods was predominantly ceremonial and ideological. The value, in turn, was a function of the similarity, both in form and in putative origin, between the novel items and familiar ones. By fitting the objects and the people who bore them into familiar categories, the Woodland Indians transformed what ought to have been an incomprehensible series of events into something understandable and desirable. Only after that ideological world was shattered and the true nature of the newcomers became known did the situation become baffling; only then did the magical crystals turn into cheap glass beads.

The process of disenchantment began fairly quickly and was predominantly the result of the fur trade.[49] The destruction of traditional Indian perceptions was not an event but a protracted process that varied enormously in its pace from Indian society to Indian society. In coastal areas the destruction of the ritual context we have been discussing came fairly quickly, whereas in the interior it survived for some time. In any case, the process was essentially the same: growing dependency, at first mutual and then inclining consistently toward white dominance, which increasingly pushed intercultural exchange out of the symbolic ceremonial realm and into the realm of the white marketplace. Discussing the influence of that process on cultural change among Indian societies in contact situations, Richard White observed, "A . . . fundamental cause which emerges from an analysis of the histories of these peoples is the attempt, not always successful or consistent, by whites to bring Indian resources, land, and labor into the market," and the fur trade was eminently successful at doing just that. Not only did the trade in animal skins involve Woodland Indians in the white marketplace, but the conjunction of that economic factor with the concomitant depletion of the native habitat had far-reaching social and cultural effects. Add the dislocating influences of white population pressure, European and native imperial warfare, climatic change, disease, and major dietary changes, including the introduction of alcohol, and what emerges is a dynamic pressure against which traditional Indian societies rooted in mutual dependence and reciprocity could not stand. As White concluded, "Understanding change involves, not finding the invisible hand of economic interests, but rather finding the reciprocal influences of culture, politics, economics, and the environment."[50]

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[48] Witthoft, "Archaeology as a Key to the Colonial Fur Trade," 205–208; Wray and Schoff, "Preliminary Report on the Seneca Sequence in Western New York," 53–63.

[49] The correlation between the fur trade and Indian cultural change is accepted fairly universally, but controversy rages over the specific nature of the relationship. Some sense of this conflict may be derived from Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley, 1978); Shepard Krech III, ed., *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade: A Critique of* Keepers of the Game (Athens, Ga., 1981); and Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 80–81.

[50] James Axtell, "The English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," in James Axtell, *The European and the In-*

The late seventeenth century was a particularly critical time in the transition from ceremonial exchange to economic transaction among most Woodland groups. The years between 1689 and 1763 were marked by constant diplomatic and military jockeying for imperial control over the New World, and the Woodland Indians were a major factor in that process.[51] These developments are significant for several reasons. First, the military and diplomatic necessity of involving the Indians in European war efforts brought the natives even more firmly into the world of the marketplace. In addition, European efforts at diplomacy pushed enormous amounts of trade goods into Indian hands. Furthermore, regardless of their color and substance, the European gifts were almost universally presented in contexts of war and other antisocial activities. These factors no doubt combined to facilitate the erosion of their metaphorical identity and ceremonial value.[52]

Once the erosion began, Indian people were quick to put aside the once magical, now commonplace items. Annemarie Anrod Shimony has noted that Northern Iroquoian groups eventually prohibited the inclusion of glass beads in burials, possibly marking a nativistic shift of attitude toward the "white man's" goods. Not surprisingly, as the perception of the exchange process changed, so did the type of commodities that were exchanged. Arthur J. Ray has noted for the Hudson's Bay District that although the trade in utilitarian items (metal knives, hatchets, kettles, and European cloth) fluctuated enormously, it was generally on the rise during the latter seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, while trade in beads declined precipitously. Despite that decline, traditional color symbolism continued to play a role in intercultural exchange. Wilbur R. Jacobs has noted that as late as the 1770s, European traders were forced to dye fabrics "red, blue, and aurora [a shade of light orange]" in order to attract customers among the Iroquois and other Eastern tribes, and even Francis Jennings points out that the Indian demand for "scarlet and blue cloth" was so significant that the pattern of economics in England was tilted toward Bristol, the shipping source of such dyed materials.[53]

It is not a coincidence that European governments were taking increasing official interest in Indians during the same period. That they were is important because their interest resulted in volumes of documents concerning Indian societies, the interior trade, and Indian-white relations. Because those documents are the products of European observers who were absorbed in their own life-and-death struggles and because they were recorded at precisely the time during which the traditional nature of Indian-white trade relations was undergoing its most precipitous erosion, it is only natural that the subtlety of reciprocal ceremonial exchange goes largely unnoticed in their pages and, since traditional histories have been based largely on those

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dian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America (New York, 1981), 253–54; Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, 1983), xv.

[51] Axtell, "English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," 261. See also Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts*; Howard H. Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689–1762* (Chicago, 1964); and Georgiana Nammack, *Fraud, Politics, and the Dispossession of the Indians: The Iroquois Land Frontier in the Colonial Period* (Norman, 1969).

[52] Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts*, 5.

[53] Shimony, *Conservatism among the Iroquois*, 235; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 79–85; Jacobs, *Wilderness Politics and Indian Gifts*, 50; Jennings, *Invasion of America*, 99.

documents, it has continued to go unnoticed. As William N. Fenton noted, "The fault lies partly in the sources themselves. Virtually all that we know of Indians at the time comes to us through the eyes and pens of white men whose interests and values differed from those of the Indians," but historians' slavish dependence on those documents and their continuing adherence to the "interests and values" of the documents' authors have played at least an equal role.[54] Thus we have perpetuated the stereotype of the irrational (or nonvolitional) primitive, and the cartoon image of Minuit and his costume jewelry continues to pop into mind when the subject of Indian-white trade is mentioned. As le Jeune warned, we have neglected the trade in metaphors and as a result have "understood nothing."

In concluding his masterful analysis of the Indian in the American imagination, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., observed rather fatalistically that "so long as the modern understanding of human actions assumes some sort of cultural influence between stimulus and response, then the future of the Indian as image must be determined by the preconceptions of White cultural premises." "The great question," he continued, "then becomes: To what extent can new meanings be infused into the old term to cancel old prejudices and invent a new evaluative image?"[55] In coming to understand that what were "toys" to Verrazzano and "trash" to John Smith were to the Woodland Indians powerful cultural metaphors that helped them to incorporate novel items and their bearers into their cognitive world, we believe that we have taken a step forward in forging such a new "evaluative image." In form, color, and putative origin, those objects and the people associated with them were like objects and creatures that were well known to have great mythic and ceremonial significance and were accepted accordingly.[56]

Given this understanding, Indians need no longer be considered mad nor have their minds colonized by white motivations. Instead, they and we are liberated from the old stereotypes and can get on with the business of evaluating the historical and continuing cultural relationship between comparably complex, rational, and real human man-beings.

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[54] William N. Fenton, *American Indian and White Relations to 1830: Needs & Opportunities for Study: An Essay* (Chapel Hill, 1957), 17.

[55] Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, 196–97.

[56] It must also be pointed out here that what seemed enormously valuable to Europeans was often considered trash by American Indians. For example, "coat beaver," so treasured by early European fur traders, were merely cast-off clothes to the Indians. As James Axtell points out, "Each group considered its own donations 'worthless trifles' or common 'baubles' and those it received valuable prizes. From their own perspectives, of course, they were not wrong." E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1870* (2 vols., London, 1958–1959), I, 43; Axtell, "English Colonial Impact on Indian Culture," 253.