

The Common Background

THE DISCOVERY OF THE AMERICAS stimulated and at the same time threatened the intellect of Europeans as no event before or since. For centuries, learned churchmen had assured them that the store of human knowledge was essentially complete—nothing else of importance was left to be learned. Now, out of the blue, there appeared lands, flora, fauna, and, above all, humans unaccounted for in the entire body of received wisdom, both sacred and secular. The first impulse, naturally, was to try to fit the new discoveries within existing categories of knowledge, but that almost immediately proved impossible. Whole new categories of understanding had to be created, from scratch.

Before 1492 the explorations and conquests of earlier centuries had made Europeans familiar with several different categories of mankind. There were several kinds of Christians, there were Saracens, there were black Africans, there were “Hindoos,” there were Tartars, and there were Orientals, each having a distinct stereotyped image. But the Indians were soon perceived to fit none of those categories. What, then, was to be made of them? Thinking persons sought guidance in scripture, in ancient and medieval philosophy, and in law, but they found only very partial answers.

What the colonizing powers had encountered, in effect, was “essential man” or, if you like, “man the animal.” Here was an evident human being, but stripped of all familiar defining characteristics. How to fit him into the accepted scheme of things? In Spain that question led to a series of prolonged, formal debates and, eventually, to some fundamental decisions about what an Indian was and ought to be. To a lesser degree and in a less formal way, the debate took place in most of the other colonizing powers as well. Each eventually reached its own conclusions, though they were sometimes less firm and less articulate than in the Spanish case.

One thing seemed clear. Regardless of moral or legal dilemmas, all of the colonial powers, consciously or unconsciously, thought of the Indians as nature’s

children. How else to explain the fact that, without exception, the Europeans regarded the Natives as malleable human clay, capable of being molded into whatever the colonizers wished them to be? Policies toward all other conquered peoples were based on fixed ideas about what those peoples were; only in the case of Indians were they based also on ideas about what they ought to be.

The decisions that were reached about the Indians differed markedly from one colonial power to another. They were based in some countries on racial, in some on religious, in some on political, in some on legal, and in some on moral grounds. The differences had nothing to do with actual cultural differences among the Indians themselves. They were rooted rather in the mindset of the colonizing powers, before they had ever encountered an Indian.

The question "What is an Indian?" could not ultimately be answered without raising, at least by implication, the broader question, "What is man?" Thus, philosophical questions dating back to the time of Socrates, and beyond, were consciously or unconsciously brought into play and had a large part in shaping the original Indian policies of the different powers. And if philosophical convictions about the nature of man played a large part in shaping understanding of the Indians, so also did contact with the Indians play a major part in shaping, and changing, understanding of the nature of mankind. The Indian of imagination remains to this day a philosophical challenge, focusing upon him all of the larger questions about the nature of humanity.

Within 120 years of Columbus's original landfall in the West Indies, no fewer than six European nations had staked out colonies on the two American continents. Two more followed in the next century and a half. The expected rewards varied considerably and were sometimes vague in the extreme, but all the powers were driven by that impulse of expansionism that has been common to the more complex human societies since the dawn of the Bronze Age.

None of the powers had, at the start, anything that could be called a national (which is to say, royal) Indian policy. Indeed, none of them except the Iberians had given much thought to the Indians. They were simply among the resources of the newly acquired territories, and they became subject to European royal authority by right of conquest, in the same way as did conquered peoples in Europe itself. It was left to the colonists on the ground to decide how to deal with them and what use if any was to be made of them.

But the colonists, like a great many frontiersmen before and since, were an unruly and rapacious lot, and the abuses and political chaos that they wrought were such that, sooner or later, the parent governments felt compelled to intervene and to lay down rules for dealing with the Indians. In the process, they were obliged first to decide what an Indian was and second what he ought to be. This happened within a generation in the Spanish colonies, considerably later in the English, French, and Dutch colonies. Only in the Portuguese colonies was the proper status of the Indians never really resolved.

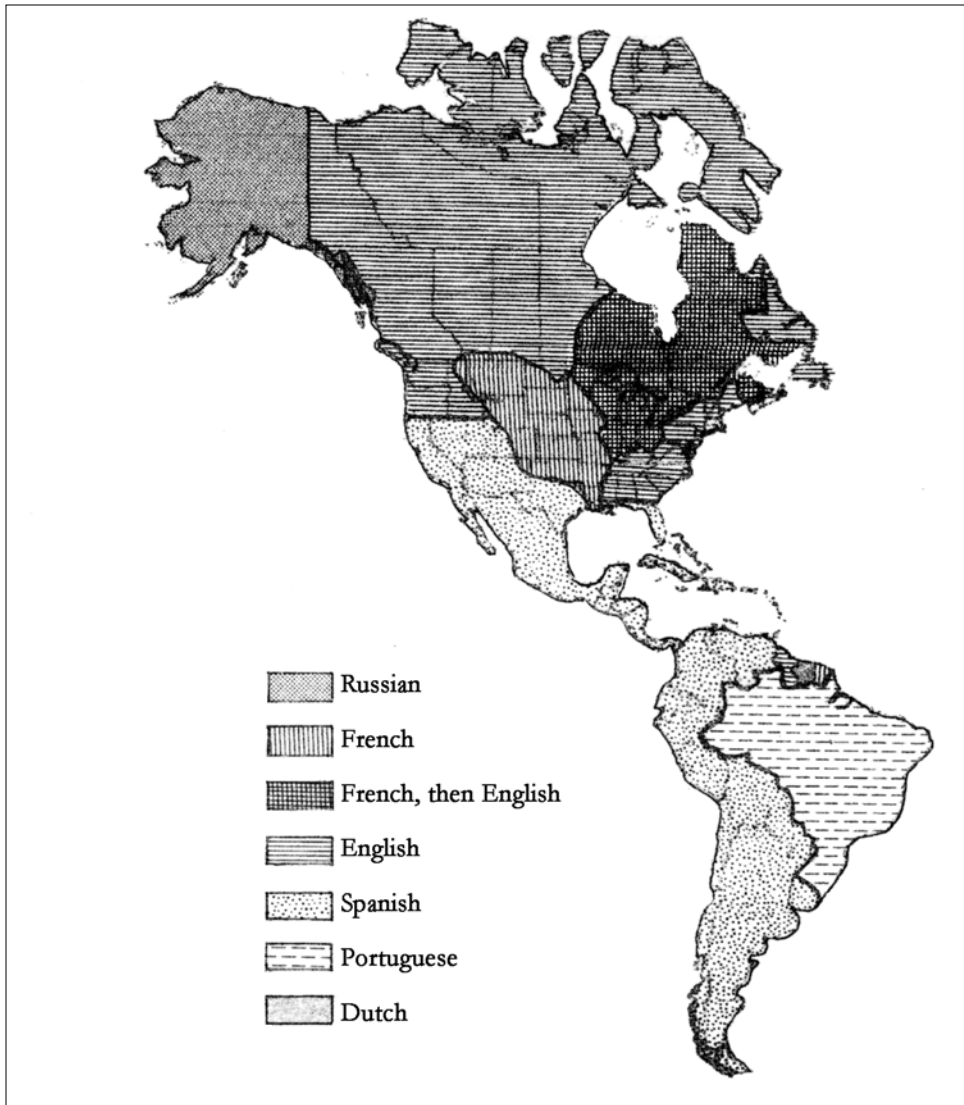


Figure 1.1. The maximum theoretical extent of European colonial claims in the Americas. Large areas in northern North America, Amazonia, and southern South America were not actually settled or effectively controlled in colonial times. The extent of the northern territories is very much exaggerated in this Mercator projection.

The Racial Perception

Though the Indian policies of the various powers came to differ significantly, all of them started from a few common premises. The first was the unitary, essentially racial conception of the Indian, with its implication that what is good for one is good for all. Along with it came the conception that, for one reason or another and in one way or another, the Indian was an inferior being. As such, he

could and appropriately should be made subject to European masters. As such, also, he was destined to occupy the lower ranks in colonial society, if he was incorporated at all.

Inferiority, however, can be conceived in many ways—as a matter of race, or innate intelligence, or religion, or cultural development, or political institutions, or moral virtue, to name a few. The European powers from the beginning viewed Indian inferiority from widely different perspectives, and from those perspectives flowed their divergent Indian policies. To the Portuguese the Indian was racially deficient, a fit subject for enslavement by the will of God. Later this was largely true also of the Russians in Alaska, although circumstances forced them to show more respect for the Native cultures than did the Portuguese. To the Spanish he was religiously deficient and in need of conversion. To the French he was culturally deficient and in need of Europeanization. To the British, as well as to the Dutch and the Swedes in their short-lived colonial empires, he was economically deficient, and there was no place for him within the colonial enterprise. Finally, to the Danes in Greenland he was a child, in need above all of protection.

The Legal Background

All of the colonial powers had a background in Roman law and medieval law, which have been powerful formative influences in European civilization. The Code of Justinian, promulgated in 529, was acknowledged by all of them as the foundation stone of all later law. That code embodied a uniquely Roman conception of natural law: the *jus gentium*. The ultimate legitimation for law was to be found neither in divine revelation nor in the wisdom of the ancients, but in the principles and practices that were seen to be common to all peoples, which must therefore be evidence of nature's intended order. Those principles should be overtly recognized and should form the basis for administering all peoples, whether in the homeland or as conquered subjects.

Another important legal tenet from the same era derived not from Justinian but from St. Augustine, whose doctrines had an enormous influence on later European thought. Augustine argued that wars in general were simply evidence of man's inherently evil nature but, at the same time, conceded that there could be "just wars," in which one side was clearly in the right and the other in the wrong. It was a doctrine destined to be cited again and again by European powers as they waged war against Indian groups.

The European Middle Ages were quintessentially a legalistic era, and governments turned to Roman law as a legitimizing authority second only to holy writ. Unlike the more secular-minded Romans, the medieval jurists—all of them clerics—took it for granted that natural law must be evidence of God's will, even though it was not revealed in scripture. But precisely because it was *not* revealed in scripture, they debated for centuries about its content and its limits.

Their thought finally reached a culmination in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, especially the *Summa Theologica*, which became standard church teaching on the subject of law until well into the twentieth century. He argued, in essence, that God had imbued man with an innate quality of reason that led him to construct reasonable laws, which everyone could agree to. Natural law, as it is found among all peoples, is not equivalent to divine decrees; it derives from divine will only in the sense that it proceeds from man's God-given reason.

The doctrines of Aquinas contributed overtly to the formulation of Indian policy only in Spain, where they were repeatedly cited during the sixteenth-century debates sponsored by the Spanish crown (see chapter 2). In many countries, however, they helped to create a certain climate of acceptance and even of appreciation for Indian customs. Notwithstanding their unprecedented strangeness, the fact that the Indians had the basic institutions—the family, religion, political leaders, property, and so on—and the same prohibitions against murder, theft, and other crimes that are found in European cultures showed that they were basically governed by natural law. Evidently, therefore, they were descendants of Adam like everyone else, not the products of a separate creation as some early thinkers had argued. There was consequently no theologically legitimate reason for interfering with or suppressing their cultures, except in the domain of religion.

But a very different conception of natural law was formulated by the medieval popes as justification for the Crusades. They argued that “it is natural for man to worship the one and only God. Every rational creature was made for the worship of God” (Williams 1990:46). The Saracens were possessed of the same God-given reason as the Christians and, as such, were as much entitled as Christians to their lands and chattels. But in denying the Christian faith, they were deliberately declining to use their powers of reason; consequently, they forfeited all rights under natural law. Their property could rightfully be confiscated by crusading Christian armies enforcing the universal jurisdiction of Rome. The church militant in fact decreed that it was not only the right but also the duty of Christian nations to conquer non-Christian nations, if only for the purpose of bringing them to the one true faith. These were “just wars,” according to the doctrine of Augustine, and required no other *casus belli*.

Papal decrees provided the original rationalization for the colonial enterprises of Spain, Portugal, and France. But the papal doctrines had been formulated with Saracens rather than Indians in mind, and in applying them to the Native Americans, a difficulty was soon recognized. The Saracens could be identified without hesitation as infidels, since they had heard and rejected Christ's message. But could the Indians also be considered infidels, when they had never been offered the message? If not, there was still ample justification for converting them, but no right to dispossess them of their lands and other property. This issue was debated at length in Spain, the ultimate decision being that the Indians retained the same rights as other peoples under natural law. They could be and regularly

were dispossessed, but it always had to be under some form of law. There was no right of conquest *per se*.

The Spanish jurists eventually came to deny the whole concept of papal authority in secular affairs, which had provided the original sanction both for the Crusades and for the American colonial enterprises. The same conclusion was reached in France, whose king had also grown strong enough that he could afford to challenge the pope. It was only in Portuguese Brazil that the original papal sanction, that of bringing salvation by force to the infidels, continued to go unchallenged.

In the early Protestant England of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, the advantages of colonizing the New World were widely discussed and debated. However, the arguments advanced were almost entirely economic, moral, and political, rather than strictly legal. American colonies would bring wealth to the nation, civilization (including but not limited to Christianity) to the heathens, and confusion to the papal nations. These arguments were sufficiently convincing, and none of the Protestant rulers attempted to cite a legal justification for colonial ventures (see Williams 1990:121–232). The royal charter of the Virginia Colony, in 1606, cited “propagating of Christian religion to such People as still live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance” as objectives of the colony but did not claim either divine or legal sanction (*ibid.*:201). It is true that two leading jurists, Alberico Gentili and Sir Robert Coke, sought to justify England’s civilizing mission among the Indians on the ground of natural law, using arguments basically similar to those of the Spanish, but their position was not endorsed by the court and was later condemned as reflecting “the madness of the Crusades” (*ibid.*:200).

It was not until a generation later, in the face of both Indian and Dutch attacks, that the English began to claim a basis for their colonization under natural law. By their attacks on the Jamestown settlement, the Indians had declared themselves “outlaws of humanity” and thus without natural rights. Nevertheless, the justification most often cited by the colonists themselves was the right of conquest, a right not sanctioned under any Christian code of law.

Though the Protestant nations repudiated all forms of papal authority, their basic legal institutions continued to be based on the Justinian Code no less than were those of Catholic nations. A particular legacy of that code, which survives throughout the western world to the present day, is its heavy emphasis on property—especially landed property—as essential to the organization and proper functioning of society. An inordinate amount of western law is concerned with the definition, the protection, and the transfer of property. Anyone who has bought or sold a piece of landed property will be aware of the cumbersome legal procedures involved, including a mandatory re-survey of the boundaries, even if the previous one was only a year earlier. By contrast, the other great body of universal law, that of Islam, is much more concerned with persons than with property.

In keeping with Justinian principles, laws relating to the Indians have

continued to relate as much to their property as to their persons. All of the colonial powers recognized that the Indians had inherent “rights in the soil” by virtue of prior possession and could not be dispossessed without some form of law. And it remains true today that the “Indian problem” as it persists in nearly every country revolves more around the issue of land rights than any other question, rights to which the Natives are entitled under the principles of Roman law.

The Sociopolitical Background

Critics of the colonial regimes often forget that they were not established by modern, “enlightened” nation-states. They were the products of absolute monarchies, in which inequalities of person and of rank were part of the God-given order of things. Monarchs ruled by divine right; nobles enjoyed power and privilege by virtue of lineage and landed possessions; the clergy enjoyed other powers and other privileges as the agents of the “one true faith.” Below them there was no such thing as a truly free citizen, except in a few self-governing cities; there were only varying degrees of unfreedom, determined mainly by a person’s occupation or possessions. At the bottom of the scale were peasants, who made up the vast bulk of the population and whose social status was hardly better—and indeed at times worse—than that of Indians in the colonies.

At the time of their first colonial enterprises, all of the colonial nations except Holland were absolute monarchies. In all such regimes, foreign relations, including both war and colonization, were the exclusive domain of the ruler. It can rarely be assumed therefore that Indian policies reflected the will of the people or even of legislatures. They were made exclusively by royal decree, generally after consulting ministers but not always following their advice. They were almost invariably made without consulting either the conquered peoples or the colonists, who very often were solidly opposed to them. The American War of Independence provides the most obvious example of this.

The practice of making Indian policy by presidential decree persisted in many of the Latin American republics long after their independence, and it survives in some (notably Guatemala and Paraguay) to this day. It was only in the United States and Canada, after they achieved self-government, that Indian policy making passed genuinely into the hands of the electorate. If policy in the Latin American republics was often erratic and inconsistent because it depended on the whims of dictators, in the United States and Canada it has been equally so because it has depended on the changing wishes of the electorate.

The Economic Background

At the time when they launched their colonial enterprises, the European nations were just emerging from the feudal politico-economic system that had been dominant for centuries. It was a wholly agrarian system, based on large, self-sufficient

estates owned by titled nobles and worked by serfs perpetually bound to the land. By 1492, however, the system everywhere in Europe was in decay as power and wealth passed from the landed gentry to the rapidly growing and rapidly prospering urban bourgeoisie. The new economic system they developed, latterly called mercantilism, was based wholly on trade rather than agrarian production as the basis of wealth. Money, meaning basically gold and silver, replaced land as the recognized measure of wealth.

The wealth of merchants and entrepreneurs derived simply from profits: selling or reselling goods for more than they had cost. The wealth of nations involved essentially the same principle. It derived from a favorable balance of trade, achieved by maximizing exports and minimizing imports. Since trade goods had to be paid for in cash, a favorable balance of trade resulted in the steady accumulation of cash in the hands of the merchants, as well as in the national treasury. In western Europe, however, this was more easily said than done, since most of the countries produced pretty much the same goods. The way to get hold of exportable goods that other countries did not have was to acquire new territories with new products: colonies.

Mercantilism, not land hunger, was the engine that drove the colonial enterprises of all the European powers. Columbus and his immediate followers were all looking for new trade routes to the Orient, the source of the most profitable trade goods in the European market. But it was soon discovered that the New World lands, though they blocked the way to the Orient, could produce just about all the exotic goods that anyone could desire. Tobacco, indigo, cotton, and, above all, sugar and furs created whole new markets, virtually from nothing, and they soon replaced the spices of the Orient as the primary sources of mercantile wealth.

Colonial products were not, in an economic sense, imports; they were essentially part of the internal economy of each European country. Unlike foreign imports, they were subject to no taxation or restriction. They were produced for and shipped to European merchants at no cost except that of production and transport. They were then resold for profit, either in the home country or more often abroad. Production costs were kept low by paying the Indian producers as little as possible, if anything, and many systems were devised for conscripting their labor. The colonies were usually forbidden from sending their products anywhere except to the parent country, and the ships of foreign powers were often impeded by force from calling at their ports.

While most of the colonies created wealth indirectly, by the production of trade goods for sale, the Spanish colonies produced it directly, through the mining of gold and silver. The almost immediate success of the Spaniards in finding the vast gold resources of Mexico and the Andes was the stimulus for colonial ventures by most of the other powers, which hoped in the beginning to find their own gold sources. They turned to commodity production when their New World colonies failed to produce precious metals, but it was not long before they found

that Caribbean sugar and North American furs, in particular, were just about as good as gold.

Many of the New World colonies were founded from the beginning by merchant venture companies, operating under royal charters but entirely with their own finances and resources. This was initially true of the French, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, and several of the English colonies. Sooner or later, however, the crown assumed direct control of many of them. It became necessary in most cases because maintaining the colonies, in the face of increasing competition and Indian hostility, became more and more expensive. The merchant companies could not raise the repeated inputs of fresh capital needed to keep the enterprises going. Above all, they could not raise the armies necessary to defend their colonies against rivals.

The Military Background

Wars, a byproduct of the feudal system, were more or less endemic in the European Middle Ages. In the century before they undertook their colonial enterprises, every one of the major powers had been at war with at least one of the others. Although few if any had standing armies, they had in place the means for recruiting, training, and supplying them. By the sixteenth century, all the nations were experienced in deploying reasonably well-organized and disciplined armies. They had well-developed tactics, involving combinations of infantry, cavalry, archery, and artillery in a variety of formations. Firearms, though still crude and clumsy, were coming increasingly to replace archery, and cannons were standard equipment.

The Europeans thus had a huge advantage over plains and desert tribes, in the matter of numbers, weaponry, and discipline. But those advantages were largely lost in the forests, where the traditional Indian tactics of ambush and surprise were often a match for the colonists. The English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese all found that they could not subdue the forest tribes without the aid of other forest tribes. In general, throughout Central and South America, the denser were the forests, the longer the Indians were able to hold out against European subjugation. A few tribes still do so today.

State armies, however, played almost no part, initially, in establishing the New World colonies. To the extent that organized military forces were employed, they were private armies recruited and paid for by the conquistadores or the merchant companies. Once the colonies were on the ground, however, armies were needed to defend them not only against Indian attack but also even more from attack by rival colonial powers. In this enterprise, Indian allies were regularly enlisted, especially by the Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

As the enormous wealth to be had, especially from sugar and furs, became evident, the regions that produced those goods became arenas of recurring armed conflict. The English, French, Dutch, and Swedes competed fiercely for the North

American fur trade, regularly attacking one another's outposts or provoking their Indian allies to do so. In the long run, the Dutch drove out the Swedes, the English in turn drove out the Dutch, and the English finally overcame the French as well. Every one of the Eurasian powers except Russia also had sugar colonies in the Caribbean, and they were so prized that the West Indian islands changed hands in the course of every major European war in the eighteenth century. The fur market eventually collapsed, but sugar remained so valuable a commodity that all the powers hung on to their Caribbean colonies long after they had surrendered the others to independence movements.

Navies as well as armies were needed, to guard both the colonies and the supply ships that carried their goods to the parent countries. In addition, unlicensed but tacitly encouraged privateers preyed on the Spanish treasure ships, siphoning off some of the seemingly endless supply of Mexican and South American gold and silver to other countries. At the beginning of the colonial era, only Spain, Portugal, and Holland were already established naval powers. A century later, all the colonial nations were. Over the course of a couple of centuries, European forests were so ravaged for shipbuilding timber that some of them have never recovered.

The Religious Background

The Roman Catholic Church and its doctrines were a dominant force throughout the Middle Ages in all of the Eurasian countries except Russia, where the Greek Orthodox Church played a similar role. At the time when they launched their colonial enterprises, England, Holland, Sweden, and Denmark had recently broken away from Rome and embraced several quite divergent Protestant doctrines. Yet, the legacy of Catholic thinking remained strong in all of them. Each had a state religion, proclaimed as the "one true faith," and each sought actively to suppress rival doctrines. Tolerance for religious diversity developed gradually in the Protestant countries and to some extent in France, but it was not present at the outset of the colonial era.

It was a fundamental Catholic doctrine, arising out of the Crusades, that infidel nations were not to be tolerated. They could and should be converted, using whatever force was required. This was the original sanction for the colonial enterprises of Spain, Portugal, and France, and while they soon developed other, more lucrative interests, they never lost sight of their evangelical obligation. The pope had charged the Iberian and French monarchs specifically with the responsibility not only for religious conversion but also for Indian welfare and protection. That responsibility was delegated by the rulers to various missionary orders, operating nominally as agents of the crown. It fell especially to the Jesuits, an order specifically founded for the purpose of converting infidels. The extent to which the missions actually received support from the crown varied from country to country

and from age to age, and they were often actively opposed by the colonists on the ground. However, it was taken for granted by everyone throughout the colonial era that Indians were the special responsibility of the missionaries. In several Latin American countries, this remains true to the present day.

Given the extent of their royal backing and the coercive means at their disposal, it is hardly surprising that the Catholics in the end achieved nearly total success. The number of at least nominal Catholics in Latin America today is greater than in the entire rest of the world, while non-Catholic Indians remain only in a few remote areas not reached by state authority until the late twentieth century. There, various Protestant missionary societies have been at work, as they have also among the Catholics themselves, but their converts still compose only a tiny minority of the Christian population.

While the success of the Catholics can be attributed in large part to their state backing, it is also true that this church, with its elaborate rituals, colorful pageantry, and multiplicity of saints, was uniquely constituted to appeal to the Indians. Above all, Catholicism brought participatory religion to the level of every town and village, where previously the great ceremonies had been confined to a few centers of power. Throughout Latin America today there are no more devout Catholics than the Indians, who have wrought many elaborations of their own upon the original faith.

The non-Catholic colonial nations adopted three different Protestant sects as their state religions: Anglican in the case of the English (but not the Scots), Calvinist in the case of the Dutch, and Lutheran in the case of the Swedes and Danes. These sects varied substantially in the extent of their zeal for evangelism. Because they were all vehemently anti-papal, they rejected out of hand the concept of the church militant. Yet, they all continued to share the universalist view that all the world was meant to be Christian and non-Christians should be brought to the true faith when the opportunity arose.

A complication arose from the fact that all of the Protestant nations retained in their midst substantial Catholic minorities, and early efforts to suppress them had eventually to be abandoned. England harbored in addition a considerable number of dissenting Protestant sects. In the end, all the Protestant nations had to accept, however grudgingly, the principle of religious or at least sectarian diversity.

None of the Protestant colonies were undertaken, even nominally, for evangelical purposes, with the partial exception of the Danish reoccupation of Greenland. Nor was missionary activity an important feature of any of them, again with the exception of Greenland. The policy of the English, Dutch, and Swedish rulers was simply to allow missionary organizations to operate within their colonies, at their own expense and their own risk. In the case of the English, different sects were given the primary but not exclusive right to operate in different colonies: the Puritans in Massachusetts and Connecticut, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, the

Catholics in Maryland, and the Anglicans in the colonies from Virginia southward. But under this permissive policy there was no significant amount of conversion during colonial times in any of the Protestant settlements.

The Russian Orthodox Church was as adamant as the Roman Catholic Church in claiming to be the only true faith, and just as active in suppressing dissent. The Russians, however, had not participated in the Crusades and had not embraced the Roman doctrine of the church militant. The religious policy of the tsars was essentially that of the Protestant rulers: permitting but not subsidizing missionary activity. It was, however, permitted to the Russian church only. Again, the number of converts was small, except among the Aleuts, who were virtually Russian slaves. Curiously, the wholesale conversion of the Tlingits, Haidas, and other southeastern Alaska tribes to the Russian faith took place not under Russian rule but a generation later, under US rule. It was an expression of defiance against the missionary efforts of Protestant sects.

Imaginary Alternatives

Geographical proximity determined that America should be subjugated by Christian European nations. In order to appreciate how much that accident of history shaped the fate of the Native inhabitants, it is instructive to consider how they might have fared under either of the two great non-Christian powers of the time, the Ottomans and the Chinese. In reality, of course, neither of these empires commanded sufficient naval power to establish and maintain overseas colonies; the discussion here is purely hypothetical.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire was politically a vast, autocratic patronage system. Power flowed from the sultan to his provincial governors (emirs) and from them to their various minions. All offices, whether civil or military, were appointive, and the occupants could be removed, with or without cause, at any time. Occasionally, an emir or a vizier might be succeeded in office by his son or brother, if he was strong enough or favored enough, but there was no principle of hereditary succession to office except for the sultanate itself. Since the sultan's power over life and death was unlimited, everyone lived in fear of imperial disfavor. Emperor and emirs alike were retained in power by huge slave armies, loyal exclusively to their owner-masters because they had been totally uprooted and removed from their native societies.

Economically, the system was maximally one of private enterprise, both in rural areas and in the numerous and prosperous cities. Agrarian enterprise was mostly in the form of landed estates, worked by bondsmen who were in all practical respects serfs. However, the estates were prebendial rather than feudal; they were granted by the sultan or an emir, who was the ultimate owner of all land,

and could be revoked at any time. They were inherited only with the consent of the state.

Commerce, which was the real lifeblood of the empire, was not dominated by huge merchant combines as in the western countries; it was in the hands of myriad entrepreneurs small and large. Craft production in the cities was highly developed and encouraged, for Ottoman trade relied heavily on the export of luxury goods such as textiles, metalwork, and ceramics. Production was financed by entrepreneurs but was also regulated by a complex system of guilds, the head of each being a state appointee. State revenues came not from any direct involvement in production and trade but through a comprehensive system of taxation and tribute.

As in all patron-client systems, loyalty counted for a good deal more than ability. As a result, government ministers were often both incompetent and corrupt. The sultan was prepared to tolerate a substantial amount of both, provided the officials yielded their tribute regularly and remained totally loyal. Indeed, incompetent governors were much less likely to give trouble than able ones, who had always to be watched. Under this system, there was little opportunity for social advancement except through royal favor. The main exception was in the military domain, where proven ability could be and was recognized and rewarded. A successful local military leader would be elevated to a higher rank and given imperial preferment, lest he think about raising a rebel force.

It was a thoroughly multi-ethnic and polyglot society in which there was no pressure for cultural conformity except in the matter of religion. Even there, several different Islamic doctrines and a proliferation of localized Sufi sects were permitted. The sultan had by law to be of royal Ottoman descent, but his mother might have come from any of half a dozen nationalities that were found in the imperial harem. Apart from the emperor, anyone could be anything. Arabs, Persians, Kurds, and Tartars often occupied high places in the imperial administration, while Greeks, Armenians, and Jews made up a considerable part of the urban merchant class. Each of the minorities maintained its own schools, where its children were educated in the group's language and religion.

Turkish was the language of administration, Arabic was the acknowledged language not only of religion but also of science and learning, while Persian was the preferred language of romantic poetry. Language and learning were highly prized and could be important avenues to social and political advancement, since the higher civil officials had perforce to be literate. Access to learning, however, was a jealously guarded prerogative of the upper classes. Craftsmen, servants, and peasants were almost wholly illiterate. In some craft guilds, the secrets of the trade were so jealously guarded that it was forbidden to write them down.

In the religious field, the Ottoman Empire was a strictly Islamic state, the sultan even claiming to be the caliph of Islam and successor to Muhammad. As such, the state bound itself to the infinitely detailed strictures of Islamic law,

and there was a comprehensive system of religious courts and judges. The regulation of many aspects of social life, in particular, family life, was left wholly in the hands of these functionaries. Christians and Jews were legally tolerated, provided they paid the required tax, but in practice were often persecuted. There was no toleration for members of other faiths, who could be and were converted by the sword.

The acquisition of an Ottoman colony in America would have begun with invasion by a large, well-organized, and disciplined army, whose commander might hope to be appointed the emir of the newly conquered country. Any amount of brutality would be permitted and expected in the process of conquest, for terrorism was a recognized Ottoman tactic. After successful conquest, the indigenous ruler would be deposed and either killed or imprisoned, as would a good many of his supporters and a substantial part of his army. The native towns and cities would be extensively plundered, a part of the proceeds going to the sultan but the largest part retained by the conquerors. An emir, a tax gatherer, and religious judges would then be appointed, and Islamic law proclaimed.

Since the Native Americans were not "people of the book" (Muslims, Christians, and Jews), they had no rights under Islamic law; they could be robbed, enslaved, or killed with impunity. Those who did not convert to Islam could expect sooner or later to be enslaved. Muslims, however, could not legally be enslaved, and to avoid that fate, the largest number of Natives would very soon convert. As Muslims, very little would thereafter be required of them, beyond reciting the Arabic profession of faith. Failure to say daily prayers or to keep the Ramadan fast might bring censure or punishment from the religious courts or judges, but the Ottomans tended to be fairly lax in these matters, leaving individuals to decide for themselves how much they wanted to risk damnation. Mosque attendance under Islamic law is "meritorious" rather than prescribed, and mosques would probably be patronized by the conquerors much more than by their new converts.

All the conquered lands would be parceled out as estates to the conquerors, and their occupants bound to servitude. In this respect, the Ottoman enterprise would be hardly different from that in the Spanish colonies, the main difference being that there would be more emphasis on agriculture and less on animal husbandry. Extensive wheat cultivation would especially be emphasized. Horses, however, would be bred in large numbers, to carry the province's extensive commerce as well as to supply its cavalry forces.

The growth of cities, especially along the seacoasts, would be strongly encouraged. These would be the main places of immigrant settlement, and merchants as well as skilled craftsmen from other parts of the empire would flood in. The population of these cities would be overwhelmingly non-Native, and Indians would be found mainly in menial and service occupations. Many would be slaves. Native youths would, however, be co-opted as apprentices in the craft trades, under the

supervision of foreign master craftsmen and entrepreneurs. These would by no means all be Turks; diaspora communities of Jews would dominate certain areas of metalcraft, Armenians would control fine leatherwork and textile production, and maritime trade would be largely in the hands of Greeks.

The social system would be minutely stratified, but without reference to race or nationality. At the top of the pyramid would be the high civil and religious officials and the scholars, then the merchant entrepreneurs, the rural landholders, the craft guilds in descending order from the least to the most dirty, members of the service industries and rural peasants, and finally slaves. But anyone of any race or nationality could theoretically occupy any high or low position.

However, opportunities for social or political advancement for Native Americans would be very limited, since there was no indigenous literate class and no access to schooling. Their main opportunity for advancement would be in the military field, in slave raids or wars against wild tribes or in putting down rebellions by seditious emirs. In time, some Native Americans could rise in this way and gain imperial favor, resulting in land grants or even appointment to high office. Some in time might themselves become emirs, probably serving in districts far removed from their regions of origin. Peasants on the land might retain a degree of tribal identity, but those who rose higher in the system would invariably have to leave it behind, identifying their interests and giving their loyalty entirely to the conquerors.

Neither the Ottomans nor the Arabs ever showed an interest in conquering forested regions, where there was a possibility for neither large-scale agriculture nor urban development. There was in fact an economic advantage in leaving them unconquered, or at least unconverted, for the regime had a continuing need for the fresh slave supplies that could be obtained from raids on these regions. Slaves, who made up the bulk of the armies, were generally forbidden to marry, so their numbers had to be replenished in each generation. The Ottoman New World colony would therefore most probably have, by design, an unconquered hinterland. At the same time, there would be a continuing incentive to keep on expanding the colony into as yet unconquered regions, where fresh plunder and tribute could be had.

Indian minorities among the peasantry might at times rebel against the heavy yoke under which they labored, but political instability would come not from them but from disaffected members of the ruling elite, the emirs and military commanders who resented the absolute authority of the sultan and the burden of tribute that he imposed on them. Possessed of their own armies, they would be tempted from time to time, when the sultanate was weak, to establish semi-independent monarchies, perhaps giving lip service to imperial suzerainty while retaining all practical power in their own hands. They could then appoint their own kinsmen to the higher administrative positions, retain most or all of the tribute, and in the end pass on the monarchy to their brothers or sons.

When the empire broke up, Ottoman America might have devolved into a series of petty, warring principalities vying for control of the former imperial dominions—exactly as actually happened in the Arabic-speaking regions and Balkan regions that were once under Ottoman control. But the new states would be no more democratic than the preceding regime, and Indians would continue to be found mainly among the rural peasantry and urban lower classes. Their situation would for all practical purposes be little different from what it was in the former Spanish dominions in America, with the distinction that the Indians would have no recognized legal rights and no land base to call their own.

THE CHINESE EMPIRE

China throughout much of its history had both an internal and an external empire. The internal empire included all the Chinese-speaking peoples from the Amur River to the Pearl River. Despite the commonality of language, especially written language, they often composed a series of small, warring states. There was nevertheless an ancient tradition that all the Chinese peoples once were, and should again be, ruled by a single righteous emperor under the mandate of heaven. Heads of warring states commonly aimed for that role, and from time to time they succeeded in unifying the country through a succession of conquests. This was the case under the Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, which came to power at about the same time that the first colonial ventures in the Americas were being undertaken. Having unified the country, the Qing proceeded to subjugate Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet to re-create the external empire.

The internal empire was held together through a combination of military force, the co-optation of local elites, and an elaborate national bureaucracy, the mandarins. The latter constituted a vast imperial patronage system, yet, at the same time, it was a meritocracy. Admission to the several levels of mandarin status was attained by passing written examinations, which were nominally open to anyone except “mean people” (mainly people from the servant classes). But having achieved mandarin status, the successful applicant would still have to await actual appointment to a post, through imperial favor.

The whole of sinophone China was administered as a unified nation, and yet it remained fundamentally an empire. Loyalty was not to the state but to the emperor, and it could be and was withdrawn if the emperor was seen to have lost the mandate of heaven. He had to maintain his rule, even over his own subjects, by the threat or the actuality of military force. Natural disasters or epidemics were a priori evidence that the mandate of heaven had been withdrawn, and they often precipitated the fall of dynasties.

The external empire was a tributary system pure and simple. It did not involve colonization, but simply the submission of foreign rulers to Chinese authority and the payment of a regular tribute. There was no interference with Native society, culture, or language, except that a large part of the ruler’s army would probably

be co-opted into the Chinese army. However, no army of occupation would be left in the subjugated territory. Its ruler would be kept in line by extensive gifts and imperial preferment, and he would in turn keep his subjects in line. If not, there was always the threat of a second invasion.

For obvious reasons, the Chinese imperialists were interested only in regions that could yield a large and immediate tribute—the great trading states on their western frontiers that were themselves already tribute takers. They had little interest in the more backward, forested regions to the northeast or southeast, though they might occasionally extract a tribute in furs from a Tungus chieftain. People beneath the chieftom level of political advancement were generally beneath notice.

In the New World, the Chinese imperialists would undoubtedly have confined their attention to one or more of the existing empires or state-level societies of Central or South America. Establishment of a Chinese dependency would begin with an invasion, culminating in an extremely bloody battle. At its conclusion, a good many survivors from the losing force would probably be slaughtered, though some might be incorporated into the Chinese army and sent to serve on other far-flung frontiers. “Use a dog [i.e., a barbarian] to fight a dog” was an accepted military principle.

The losing native chieftain, if he had not been killed in battle, would be forced to bow and make obeisance to the son of heaven, who would not himself have taken part in the campaign. If the native ruler had been killed, the conquerors would choose a successor acceptable to the people, from within the existing royal family. The new ruler might be forced to make the journey to Peking (today’s Beijing) to make his obeisance in person. Having done so, he would be loaded with imperial honors and titles and lavish gifts and return to his homeland to rule thereafter as a highly favored imperial client.

The new ruler would be expected to dress lavishly in Chinese silk robes, to surround himself with an abundance of Chinese luxury porcelains and lacquerwork, and to maintain a Chinese-style court. He would also build, or have built for him, a palace employing Chinese architectural styles. His court might include one or more ministers of actual Chinese nationality and would in any case require sinophone scribes for record keeping and communication with Peking. There would in all cases be an imperial ambassador, whose person was sacred. The ruler would expect to be succeeded in due course by his brother or son, according to whatever was the indigenous system of inheritance. However, Peking could at any time depose the ruler and impose a successor of its choice, though an invasion would often be required to do so since there was no army of occupation.

There would be minimal interference with the lives of anyone other than the ruler and his family. Indigenous nobles would retain their titles and privileges, after making formal obeisance to the emperor. Common people would continue with their traditional pursuits, according to the political and economic systems

already in place. Subjugation by the Chinese nevertheless was likely to cause major economic dislocations, because of the imposition of heavy annual tribute. The tribute from an American colony would probably consist mainly of furs, deerskins, and dyestuffs; later, probably also tobacco and cotton. To obtain the tributary items like cotton and tobacco that could be had within his dominion, the ruler would have to foster large-scale production, possibly laying a heavy burden of enforced quotas on the peasants. Large numbers of horses might also be required as tribute, and an extensive horse-breeding industry would have to be developed. To obtain items not produced within his realm, the ruler would have to make war on neighboring tribes or kingdoms.

Chinese merchants, operating under imperial protection but without specific imperial backing, would begin to circulate freely through the new dependency, purveying both household necessities and luxury goods. Because of their elegance, textiles would play a very large part in the trade; in time many Natives would adopt Chinese dress. Food habits would change with the introduction of new crops like wheat and millet, and everyone would begin to eat with chopsticks. Merchant colonies in time would grow into towns, where Natives could be trained in the production of Chinese-style crafts.

The ruler and his court would be required to observe the worship of the emperor's ancestors and would gain favor also by adopting Buddhism. The common people would continue without interference to practice their indigenous religions. However, Chinese or Tibetan Buddhist teachers would come among them, gaining some converts and in time founding monasteries. Converts would be taught to read arcane texts, some of them in Sanskrit, but otherwise no schooling would be available to the ordinary subjects. At the ruler's court, however, his sons and those of other nobles would be schooled in Chinese literature and philosophy.

When the dynasty became weak, the provincial ruler would be likely to withhold the tribute and dare the emperor to come and get it. His realm would for all practical purposes revert to its pre-conquest independent status, though he might for form's sake continue to acknowledge the son of heaven as a spiritual suzerain. Chinese dominion would leave in its wake a kingdom little altered in its basic social and economic institutions but governed by a Chinese-style court and bureaucracy and with a partially Sinicized culture. Ethnically, it would be a wholly Indian kingdom, in which the Native Americans would retain far more autonomy than as an outcome of either European or Ottoman rule.