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THE
WHITE MAN'S
INDIAN

Images of the American Indian
from Columbus to the Present

ROBERT F. BERKHOFFER, JR.



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PART ONE

The Idea of the Indian: Invention and Perpetuation

SINCE THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS of the Western Hemisphere neither called themselves by a single term nor understood themselves as a collectivity, the idea and the image of the Indian must be a White conception. Native Americans were and are real, but the *Indian* was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not stereotype. According to a modern view of the matter, the idea of the *Indian* or Indians *in general* is a White image or stereotype because **it** does not square with present-day conceptions of how those peoples called Indians lived and saw themselves. The first residents of the Americas were by modern estimates divided into at least two thousand cultures and more societies, practiced a multiplicity of customs and lifestyles, held an enormous variety of values and beliefs, spoke numerous languages mutually unintelligible to the many speakers, and did not conceive of themselves as a single **people—if** they knew about each other at all. By classifying all these many peoples as *Indians*, Whites categorized the variety of cultures and societies as a single entity for the purposes of description and analysis, thereby neglecting or playing down the social and cultural diversity of Native Americans **then—and now—for** the convenience of simplified understanding. To the extent that this conception denies or misrepresents the social, linguistic, cultural, and other differences among the peoples so labeled, **it lapses** into stereotype. Whether as conception or as stereotype, however, the idea of the Indian has created a reality in its own image as a result of the power of the Whites and the response of Native Americans.

If the term *Indian* and the images and conceptual categories that

go along with that collective designation for Native Americans are White inventions, then the first question becomes one already old in 1646 when an unnamed tribesman asked the Massachusetts missionary John Eliot: “Why do you call us **Indians?**” The first task of this book becomes therefore the study of the origins of the terminology and **imagery** for the collective *Indian* among those European nations most powerful in the colonization of the Western Hemisphere: Spain, France, and England. That the term survives into the present, evokes imagery and emotion yet today, and constitutes an **intellectual** classification of Native Americans in our own time raises the second major question: Why has the idea of *Indian* persisted for so many centuries? This problem is considered in general in the second half of this part as prelude to the histories of various aspects of White thinking and policy.

The Spanish Legacy of Name and Imagery

WHAT WHITES CALLED THE DISCOVERY of the New World and its inhabitants was, of course, part of the new **economic** and intellectual world of Western Europe at the time. The rising spirit of nationalism and the emergence of nation-states in that area spurred exploration of the non-European **world** and divided the rest of the globe into national spheres of colonization. The new printing press disseminated information about the newfound lands and expanded educated **Europeans'** knowledge of other peoples and their ways of life. But, if Europeans added a fourth part, America, to the **traditional tripartite** division of the inhabited world, they comprehended that New World and its peoples in terms of their own familiar conceptual categories and values, as can be seen **in the** terminology and overall images in first the Spanish and then the French and English accounts and travel **literature.**¹

The specific term *Indian* as a general designation for the inhabitants of North and South America in addition to some Asians stems **from** the erroneous geography of Christopher Columbus. Under the impression he had landed among the islands off Asia, he called the

peoples he met *los Indios*. Although he quite self-consciously gave new names to islands upon his first voyage, his application of the term *Indios* seems to have been almost casual. The word was introduced to the public in the offhand manner of an aside through his oft-reprinted letter of 1493.² Regardless of whether Columbus thought he had landed among the East Indies or among islands near Japan or even elsewhere near the Asian continent, he would probably have used the same all-embracing term for the natives, because *India* stood as a synonym for all of Asia east of the river Indus at the time and *Indies* was the broadest designation available for all of the area he claimed under royal patent.³ Even after subsequent explorations corrected Columbus's error in geography, the Spanish continued to employ *Indios* for all peoples of the New World, including the Aztec and Inca societies. As Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés explained to his readers in *De la natural hystoria de las Indias* (1526), the general term was *Indians* "for so caule wee all nations of the new founde lands."⁴ The word continues in Spanish usage today and still includes the Filipinos as well. From the Spanish term came eventually the French *Indien*, the German *Indianer*, the English *Indian*, and similar words in other European languages for the New World inhabitant.

Not only was the general word a Spanish legacy to Europe but so was the basic imagery of the Indian. Until the latter half of the sixteenth century what educated Europeans knew of the geography and inhabitants of the Americas came mainly from Spanish sources, for the initial White explorations and settlement of the Western Hemisphere were conducted under the auspices of that nation. Collections of travel accounts and chronicles of Spanish discoveries appeared as early as the first decade of the 1500s, but the first comprehensive and authoritative collection of travel literature, compiled by Giovanni Battista Ramusio under the title *Delle navigationi et viaggi* and published in three massive volumes in Venice, did not appear until the 1550s.⁵ In the third volume, which is devoted to the New World, all of the extracts and journals are of Spanish origin except for the voyages of Verrazano and Cartier for the French monarch. Likewise, the first translated materials on the Americas published by Richard Eden for the English in the same decade drew largely upon Spanish accounts except for those of some Italians exploring for other countries.⁶

The initial image of the Indian, like the word itself, came from the pen of Columbus. Although neither Columbus nor the converted Jew he took along to act as translator understood the language of the

islanders they encountered on the first voyage, the Admiral of the Ocean Sea described with confidence in his widely published letter of **1493** the lifestyles of those peoples he called *Indians*:

The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, although some of the women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them. This is not because they are not well built and of handsome stature, but because they are very marvellously timorous. . . . It is true that, after they have been reassured and have lost this fear, they are so guileless and so generous with all that they possess, that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They refuse nothing that they possess, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite any one to share it and display as much love as if they would give their hearts. They are content with whatever trifle of whatever kind that may be given to them, whether it be of value or valueless. . . .

They do not hold any creed nor are they idolaters; but they **all** believe that power and good are in the heavens and were very firmly convinced that I, with these ships and men, came from the heavens, and in this belief they everywhere received me after they had mastered their fear. This belief is not the result of ignorance, for they are, on the contrary, of **a very** acute intelligence and they are men who navigate all those seas, so that it is amazing how good an account they give of everything. It is because they have never seen people clothed or ships of such a kind. . . .

In all these islands, I saw no great diversity **in** the appearance of the people or in their manners and language. On the contrary, they all understand one another, which is a very curious thing. . . .

In all these islands, it seems to me that all men are content with one woman, and to their chief or king they give as many as twenty. It appears to me that the women work more than do the men. I have not been able to learn if they hold private property; it seemed to **me** to be that all took a share in whatever any one had, especially of eatable **things**.⁷

How Columbus ascertained the religious values and property customs of the islanders must be left to his imagination, but the description he gave of the Arawak **tribespeople** was the first in a long succession of such images of the Indian as lacking in European accomplishments but pleasant withal.

In contrast to this favorable view of Indians, he also provided the first of the bad images as well:

In these islands I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected, but on the contrary the whole population is very well formed. . . . Thus I have found no monsters, nor had a report of any, except in an island "Carib," which is the second at the coming into the Indies, and which is inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh. They have many canoes with which they range through all the islands of India and pillage and take whatever they can. They are no more malformed than are the others, except that they have the custom of wearing their hair long like women, and they use bows and arrows of the same cane stems, with a small piece of wood at the end, owing to their lack of iron which they do not possess. They are ferocious among these other people who are cowardly to an excessive degree, but I make no more account of them than of the **rest**.⁸

From this hearsay but accurate description of the Caribbean cannibals came the line of savage images of the Indian as not only hostile but depraved.

As important in establishing the early conception and imagery of the Indian was an oft-reprinted tract of Amerigo Vespucci, after whom the continents of the New World were named. In the tract that gained him this distinction, the Florentine merchant who sailed for both Spain and Portugal summarized his experiences with the natives of Brazil. Although modern scholars question the authenticity of some **of** the navigations chronicled in Vespucci's *Mundus Novus*, published around **1504-1505**, it provided European readers with the most detailed ethnography of New World peoples since **Columbus**.⁹ Furthermore, this pamphlet reinforced and enhanced the ambivalent images of the Indian in the minds of educated Europeans at the time, for its publication was even more widespread than Columbus's letter and its description of Indian customs was far more detailed and vivid. So influential was this description at the time that it deserves quotation at length to convey both its flavor and its impact upon the European imagination:

First then as to the people. **We** found in those parts such a multitude of people as nobody could enumerate (as we read in the Apocalypse), a race I say gentle and amenable. All of both sexes go about naked, covering no part of their bodies; and just as they spring from their mothers' wombs so they go until death. They have indeed large

square-built bodies, well formed and proportioned, and in color verging upon reddish. This I think has come to them, because, going about naked, they are colored by the sun. They have, too, hair plentiful and black. In their gait and when playing their games' they are agile and dignified. They are comely, too, of countenance which they nevertheless themselves destroy; for they bore their cheeks, lips, noses and ears. Nor think those holes small or that they have one only. For some I have seen having in a single face seven borings any one of which was capable of holding a plum. They stop up these holes of theirs with blue stones, bits of marble, very **beautiful** crystals of alabaster, very white bones, and other things artificially prepared according to their customs. But if you could see a thing so unwonted and monstrous, that is to say a man having in his cheeks and lips alone seven stones some of which are a span and a half in **length**, you would not be without wonder. For I frequently observed and discovered that seven such stones weighed sixteen ounces, aside from the fact that in their ears, each perforated with three holes, they have other stones dangling on rings; and this usage applies to the men alone. For women do not bore their faces, but their ears only. They have another **custom**, very shameful and beyond all human belief. For their women, being very lustful, cause the private parts of their husbands to swell up to such a huge size **that** they appear deformed and disgusting; and this is accomplished by a certain device of theirs, the biting of certain poisonous animals. And in consequence of this many lose their organs which break through lack of attention, and they remain eunuchs. They have no cloth either of wool, linen or cotton, since they need it not; neither do they have goods of their own, but all things are held in common. They live together without king, without government, and each is his own master. They marry as many wives as they please; and son cohabits with mother, brother with sister, male cousin with female, and any man with the first woman he meets. They dissolve their marriages as often as they please, and observe no sort of law with respect to them. Beyond the fact that they have no church, no religion and are not idolaters, what more can I say? They live according to nature, and may be called Epicureans rather than Stoics. There are no merchants among their number, nor is there barter. The nations wage war upon one another without art or order. The elders by means of certain harangues of theirs bend the youths to their will and inflame them to wars in which they cruelly kill one another, and those whom they bring home captives from war they preserve, not to spare their lives, but that they may be slain for **food**; for they eat one another, the victors the vanquished, and among other kinds of meat human flesh is a common article of diet with them. Nay be the more assured of this fact because the father has already been seen to eat children and wife, and

I knew a man whom I also spoke to who was reputed to have **eaten** more than three hundred human bodies. And I likewise remained twenty-seven days in a certain city where I saw salted human flesh suspended from beams between the houses, just as with us it is the custom to hang bacon and pork. I say further: they themselves wonder why we do not eat our enemies and do not use as food their flesh which they say is most savory. Their weapons are bows and arrows, and when they advance to war they cover no part of their bodies for the sake of protection, so like beasts are they in this matter. We endeavored to the extent of our power to dissuade them and persuade them to desist from these depraved customs, and they did promise us that they would leave off. The women as I have said go about naked and are very libidinous; yet they have bodies which are tolerably beautiful and cleanly. Nor are they so unsightly as one perchance might imagine; for, inasmuch as they are plump, their ugliness is the less apparent, which indeed is for the most part concealed by the excellence of their bodily structure. It was to us a matter of astonishment that none was to be seen among them who had a flabby breast, and those who had borne children were not to be distinguished from virgins by the shape and shrinking of the womb; and in the other parts of the body similar things were seen of which in the interest of modesty I make no mention. When they had the opportunity of copulating with Christians, urged by excessive lust, they defiled and prostituted themselves. They live one hundred and fifty years, and rarely fall **ill**, and if they do fall victims to any disease, they cure themselves with certain roots and herbs. These are the most noteworthy things I know about **them**.¹⁰

The influence of Vespucci's vivid characterization may be seen in the first pictorial all-Indian scene and the first known description of Indians published in the English **language**. Although naked people appeared as Indians in the woodcuts illustrating the letters of Columbus and Vespucci (see Plate 1), the first picture depicting the domestic life of the Indians as such was produced in Augsburg or Nuremberg around 1505.¹¹ Supposedly of the Tupinamba or Guarani of Brazil, the scene graphically portrayed the vice most sensational and horrifying in European **eyes—cannibalism—as** an everyday Indian way of life (see Plate 2). Native life as portrayed in the picture fits the first brief mention of *Armenica*, or America, in English. Published some time between 1511 and 1522, the text was taken from a Dutch pamphlet of the period:

the people of this **lande** have no kyng nor **lorde** nor theyr god [.]
But all thinges is **comune**/ this people goeth all naked But the men

and women have **on** theyr **heed/ necke/ Armes/ Knees/** and **fete** all with feders bounden for there **bewtynes** and sayrenes. These **folke lyven lyke bestes** without any resonablenes and the **wymen** be also as **comon**. And the men hath conversacyon with the **wymen/** who that they ben or who they fyrst **mete/** is she his **syster/ his mother/ his daughter/** or any other kyndred. And the wymen be very hooete and dysposed to lecherdnes. And they ete also **on[e] another[.]** The man eteth his **wyfe[,]** his **chylderne/** as we also have seen and they hange also the **bodyes** or persons fleeshe in the **smoke/** as men do with swynes fleshe. And that **lande** is ryght full of **folke/** for they **lyve commonly. iii. C.[300]** yere and more as with sykeness they dye **nat/** they take much **fysse** for they can goen under water and fe[t]che so the fisshes out of the water. And they werre also **on[e]** upon a **nother/** for the **olde** men brynge the yonge men **therto/** that they gather a great company therto of towne **partyes/** and come the **on[e]** ayene the other to the **felde** or **bateyll/** and flee **on[e]** the other with great hepes. And nowe holdeth the **fylde/** they take the **other prysoners** And they brynge them to deth and ete **them/** and as the dede is eten then **sley** they the rest. And they been eten **also/** or **otherwyse lyve** they longer **tymes** and many yeres more than other people for they have costly spyces and **rotes/** where they them **selfe** recover **with/** and **hele** them as they be **seke.**¹²

With **the** new printing press purveying such images in print and picture, the idea of the Indian as different from the European quickly developed in the minds of Europeans even before they knew for sure that these people did not live off Asia.

As the Spanish empire extended over the American continents and Europeans came to understand that these **new-found** lands were indeed a New World, the Spanish observations amplified what was known of the diversity of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere but did not change the fundamental conception of the Indian. The basic themes that **would** dominate so much of White thinking on Native Americans for the next few centuries were well developed in the literature on the Spanish **conquest** and settlement of the Americas. Using the twin criteria of Christianity and "civilization," Spaniards found the Indian wanting in a **long** list of attributes: letters, laws, government, clothing, arts, **trade,** agriculture, marriage, morals, metal goods, and above all religion. Judgments upon these failures might be kind and sympathetic or harsh and hostile, but no one argued that the Indian was as good as the European in this early period. Neither discovery that the new-found lands constituted a whole new world nor the conquest of the **Aztec** and **Inca** civilizations

altered the basic understanding of the *Indian* as a generic conception for the inhabitants of the Americas. Knowledge of Aztec and **Inca** achievements in art and agriculture and in social and political organization added to the concrete information about the **diversity** of peoples but did not transform the overall conception of the *Indian*.¹³ If **the** Aztecs, for example, possessed sophisticated governmental, agricultural, and social systems, so too they practiced a religion that appeared to Spanish eyes as the very worship of the Devil, with its emphasis on human **sacrifice**.¹⁴ Indians might, therefore, have the wrong or no religion, have misguided or no government, in addition to other negative qualities attributed to the stereotype, but they always stood in Christian error and deficient in civilization according to Spanish standards of measurement.

Under this impression, no wonder Spaniards debated what means were necessary to bring the Indian in line with their ideals of Christian civilization according to European criteria. Was the nature of the Indian so bestial as to demand force and ultimately enslavement to accomplish his conversion to Christ and Spanish ways, or was the Indian sufficiently rational and human to achieve these goals through peace and example alone? The Dominican friar **Barrolomé** de Las Casas, appalled by the cruelty, the suffering, and the deaths that accompanied Spanish exploitation of the natives, became the most vigorous publicist and lobbyist for the side favoring peaceful means and Indian freedom. In his arguments he portrayed the Indian as essentially virtuous:

God created these simple people without evil and without guile. They are the most obedient and faithful to their natural lords and to the Christians whom they serve. They are the most submissive, patient, peaceful, and virtuous. Nor are they quarrelsome, rancorous, querulous, or vengeful. Moreover they are more delicate than princes and die easily from work or illness. They neither possess nor desire to possess worldly wealth. Surely these people would be the most blessed in the world if only they worshipped the true **God**.¹⁵

Las **Casas'** opponent in the great formal debate on the matter in 1550 at **Valladolid**, Juan **Ginés** de **Sepúlveda**, delineated Indian character in quite different terms as he sought to justify Spanish conquest and enslavement of Native Americans:

Now compare their [the Spanish] gifts of prudence, talent, magnanimity, temperance, humanity, and religion with those little men (*hamunculos*) in whom you will scarcely find traces of hu-

inanity, who not only lack culture but do not even know how to write, who keep no records of their history except certain obscure and vague reminiscences of some things put down in certain pictures, and who do not have written laws but only barbarous institutions and customs. But if you deal with the virtues, if you look for temperance or meekness, what can you expect from men who were involved in every kind of intemperance and wicked lust and who used to eat human flesh? And don't think that before the arrival of the Christians they were living in quiet and the **Saturnian** peace of the poets. On the contrary **they** were making war continuously and ferociously against each other with such rage that they considered their victory worthless if they did not satisfy their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies, an inhumanity which in them is so much more monstrous since they are so distant from the unconquered and wild Scythians, who also **fed** on human flesh, for these Indians are so cowardly and timid, that they scarcely withstand the appearance of our soldiers and often many thousands of them have given **ground**, fleeing like women before a very few Spaniards, who did not even number a **hundred**.¹⁶

Brave or meek, the Indian stood condemned in **Sepúlveda's** words.

The significance of these two opposing conclusions, employing two disparate images, lies not in their contrast alone but in what they show about Spanish conceptions of Indian as a general category. Although Las Casas tried to differentiate orders of barbarians among Native Americans, both he and **Sepúlveda**, like other Spaniards, viewed all peoples of the Western Hemisphere as a collective entity when they **used** the term *Indios*.

French and English Terms and Images

TO WHAT EXTENT THESE CONCEPTIONS bequeathed by **the** Spanish to other Europeans became the **preconceptions** of the French and English in their subsequent contact with Native Americans is difficult to **tell**. Even without such advance information, the French and the English would have approached the New World's inhabitants with the same basic values and orientations as had the Spanish. Thus,

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whether they were or were not influenced by Spanish reports, French and English explorers saw Native Americans in light of the Christianity and civilization they knew and valued and therefore made the same comparisons as had the Spanish adventurers and settlers earlier. That such judgments had to be the outcome of contact between the French and English with the Indians was further **assured by** the type of native societies and cultures the representatives of those two nations **encountered**.¹⁷ No Aztec or **Inca** civilizations awaited discovery and exploitation in the areas claimed by the two countries. Rather than peoples with complex social and governmental organizations, the explorers of those two nations met "wilder" Indians, and so perhaps the denomination of these peoples as *sauvage* in French and *savage* in English seemed more appropriate to early explorers from those two countries. Certainly this impression led to Jacques **Cartier's** conclusion upon the natives of the **Gaspé** Basin he encountered in **1534**: "These men may very well and truly be called **wilde**, because there is no poorer people in the **world**."¹⁸

Sixteenth-century Frenchmen, Italians, and Englishmen generally employed a variant of the Latin *silvaticus*, meaning a forest inhabitant or man of the woods, for the Indian as the earlier spellings of *sauvage*, *salvatico*, and *salvage* show so well in each of the respective languages. English usage switched from *savage* to *Indian* as the general term for **Native** Americans in the seventeenth century, but the French continued to use *sauvage* as the preferred word into the nineteenth **century**.¹⁹ The original image behind this terminology probably derives from the ancient one associated with the "wild man," or *wilder Mann* in Germany. According to medieval legend and art, the wild man was a hairy, naked, club-wielding child of nature who existed halfway between humanity and **animality**. Lacking civilized knowledge or will, he lived a life of bestial self-fulfillment, directed by instinct, and ignorant of God and morality. Isolated from other humans in woods, caves, and clefts, he hunted animals or gathered plants for his food. He was strong of physique, lustful of women, and degraded of origin. As the chief historian of the image suggests:

Wildness meant more in the Middle Ages than the shrunken **significance of** the term would indicate today. The word implied everything that eluded Christian norms and the established **framework** of Christian society, referring to what was uncanny, unruly, raw, unpredictable, foreign, uncultured, and **uncultivated**. It in-

cluded the unfamiliar as well as the unintelligible. Just as the wilderness is the background against which medieval society is delineated, so **wildness** in the widest sense is the background of God's lucid order of creation. Man in **his** unreconstructed state, faraway nations, and savage creatures at home thus came to share the same essential quality.³⁰

French and English explorers, **like** Columbus, were therefore both surprised and not surprised by the lifestyles they encountered when compared to what they expected of "wild" strangers. For the **French**, the dictionary **definition** of *savage* came to be that of Andre **Thévet's** description of the **Tupinamba**: "a **marvelously** strange wild and brutish people, without faith, without law, without religion and without **civility**."²¹ In fact, these are almost exactly the words used in the great *Encyclopédie* of the eighteenth century to describe the *savage*: "peuples barbares qui vivent sans **loix**, sans police, sans religion, & qui **n'ont point d'habitation fixe**."²² According to the author of this definition, a large part of America **was** still peopled with savages who were ferocious and ate human flesh but who lived in natural liberty because they lacked civilized institutions.

English usage mixed both *savage* and *Indian* in the travel accounts and letters of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Information about the Western Hemisphere and its inhabitants first became available in any quantity in English through the translations of Richard Eden in the **1550s**. In these translated texts and the marginal notations upon them, **Eden** uniformly employed *Indians* for **Indios**.²³ The more famous Richard Hakluyt **the** Younger in his great *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, published in **1598-1600**, also uses *Indians* for *Indios* in the Spanish accounts he includes but "**wild men**" for the *sauvaiges* of Jacques **Cartier's** journals. Moreover, in his marginal notations he **invariably** writes *savages* regardless of the original word in the **text**.²⁴ He shares this preference for *savage* with many of the early **English** adventurers in their **denomination** of the natives of Roanoke, Virginia, New England, and **northward**.²⁵ Many other explorers, however, did select more neutral terms, like *inhabitant*, to describe the Native Americans they met in the sixteenth **century**,²⁶ but no English explorer's account used *Indians* **until** the seventeenth century.

The officers of the Virginia Company in London wrote of *natives* in their instructions to governors of that colony, but the recipi-

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ents of those letters and the Englishmen resident in Virginia talked most frequently of *Indians* and less often of *infidels* and *savages* in reply, even though they were well aware of the various tribes among whom they lived, as the famed Captain John Smith's writings show.²⁷ The same mingling of general terms for Native Americans and specific names and understanding of individual tribes can be found in the writings of the Pilgrims and Puritans during the first decades of their plantations in New England.²⁸

What Englishmen called Native Americans and how they understood them after a few decades of settlement was summarized by Roger Williams in a brief analysis of nomenclature in *A Key Into the Language of America; Or, An Help to the Language of the Natives in That Part of America Called New-England (1643)*. Under the heading "By what names are they distinguished," he divided terminology into two sorts:

First, those of the *English* giving: as *Natives, Salvages, Indians, Wild-men*, (so the *Dutch* call them *Wilden*) *Abergeny men, Pagans, Barbarians, Heathen*.

Secondly, their *Names*, which they give themselves.

I cannot observe that they ever had (before the coming of the *English, French* or *Dutch* amongst them) any *Names* to difference themselves from strangers, for they knew none. . . .

They have often asked *mee*, why we call them *Indians*[,] *Natives, &c.* And understanding the reason, they will call themselves *Indians*, in opposition to *English, &c.*²⁹

Although few Englishmen possessed the linguistic skill or the toleration of the founder of Rhode Island, his summary of European terms seems accurate in light of the publications and manuscripts of the time. For Englishmen as for other Europeans, the use of general terms for Native Americans coexisted with knowledge of specific differences among the peoples so denominated. Williams's list also suggests that Native Americans themselves needed new general terms to designate the peoples invading their lands and to differentiate themselves from those strangers just as much as the Europeans did in the contact process.

Less used than *Indian* and *savage* but still prevalent among early English synonyms for Native Americans, as Williams's little catalog indicates, were the terms *infidel*, *heathen*, and *barbarian*. Both *infidel* and *heathen* were based upon religious criteria and derive from ancient Jewish and early Christian distinctions between themselves and

other peoples. In fact, at the time of the initial English colonization of the New World, the word *nation* still retained its older meaning of a people or race usually heathen as well as the more modern meaning of a country or kingdom. In brief, the term designated a foreign people of another religion or culture as **well** as the territory they **occupied**.³⁰ Given the ambiguity of the word at the time and the nationalistic outlook emerging then, small surprise that Englishmen applied *nation* to what later was called a *tribe*. The latter term did not replace the former until well into the nineteenth century. **The** older usage is perhaps **best** known today in the references to the League of the Iroquois as the Five Nations, but then the term was used widely for individual tribes as well as for other **confederacies** in the colonial and early national period of the United States. *Barbarian* contrasted, of course, with one who was civilized and stemmed from the ancient Greeks' prejudice against peoples whose languages sounded a babble to them. By the sixteenth century, *barbarian* and *heathen* had come to be used almost interchangeably in English usage, for civility and Christianity were presumed necessarily and therefore inextricably **associated**.³¹

Just as all these terms indicate that the French and the English like the Spaniards compared their own societies and cultures with those of the Native Americans, so they too, like their rivals to the south, created basically favorable and unfavorable images of the Indian. What the French concluded from these images of the good and **bad** *sauvage* is told in pages 12–22.³² How the English moved from supposedly factual descriptions of the Native Americans to the symbolism of the Indian can be traced briefly from Richard Hakluyt to Thomas Hobbes and John **Locke**.³³

The English discoveries of the last quarter of the **sixteenth** century could be followed easily by that country's readers from the accounts reprinted or published for the first time in the various compendia of Richard Hakluyt the Younger. In the folio pages of the third volume of his last and greatest collection, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation (1598–1600)*, appeared the usual opposing descriptions of the inhabitants of the New World. Of the English accounts he printed, perhaps no person provided a more discouraging view of the Americans than Dionyse Settle in his discussion of Innuik Eskimo eating habits. After an account reeking with his disgust for their custom of eating meat raw, he concludes: "What knowledge **they have** of God, or what **Idoll** they adore, we have no perfect intelligence, I thinke them rather

The *Idea* of the Indian

Anthrophophagi, or **devourers** of mans flesh than other wise: for that there is no flesh or fish which they find dead (smell it **neverso** filthily) but they eat it, as they **finde** it without any other dressing. A loathe-some thing, either to the beholders or **hearers.**"³⁴ From this same man comes the remarkable tale of the capture of an **old** woman during a skirmish with the Eskimos: "The old wretch, whom divers of our saylers supposed to be eyther a devill, or a witch, had her buskins plucked off, to see if she were cloven footed, and for her ugly hew and deformity we let her **goe.**"³⁵

In this case, preconception seemed to have created image, and image in turn became fact. From Hakluyt, the diligent reader could also obtain a most favorable view of the Indian. Now well known through modern quotation are the phrases of Arthur Barlowe, who sailed in **1584** under the auspices of Sir Walter Raleigh to reconnoiter his patron's grant from the Queen. He sums up his first impression of the natives of Roanoke Island after his initial reception as "very **hand-some**, and goodly people, and in their behavior as **mannerly** and civil, as any of Europe." After a banquet, he again comments: "We were entertained with all love, and kindnes, and with as much bountie, after their manner, as they could possibly devise." Although he noted that the Indian peoples maintain an extremely ferocious warfare among themselves, he depreciated any fears of hostilities from these natives because: "for a more **kinde** and loving people, there can not be found in the world, as farre as we have hitherto had **triall.**"³⁶ No wonder Barlowe concluded: "Wee found the people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile, and treason, and such as lived after the manner of the golden **age.**"³⁷

From Raleigh's attempt to establish a colony upon the Carolina **coast** come some of the best "**scientific**" descriptions of Native Americans in the sixteenth **century.**³⁸ Accompanying the expedition that founded the Roanoke colony were the artist John White, who provided detailed drawings of the flora and fauna of the area, and the mathematician Thomas Hariot, who gave an elaborate description "of the commodities there found . . . and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants" in his *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*. Hariot assured his fellow Englishmen that the natives of the proposed colony were easily intimidated by **White** arms and valor, that their towns and fighting strength were small, and that they were in awe of English artifacts and skills. In short, the natives were readily available for English colonization and exploitation, to tell which was his purpose in writing the pamphlet. Published

originally in 1588 and included by Hakluyt in his travel collections, it was reissued in 1590 by the Flemish engraver and publisher Theodor de Bry at the behest of Hakluyt as the first volume in his great illustrated series of *Grand Voyages to America*. Now Englishmen and other Europeans could see pictures of Indians as well as read the accompanying ethnography of Hariot. Under the hands of De Bry's engravers, the portraits and posture of the Carolina Indians became more classical in pose and composition than the more accurate watercolors of John White, from which the engravers worked (Plate 3). In pictures and in Latin, German, French, and English, Europeans could judge for themselves the appearance, the clothing, the government, the religion, the manner of fishing and making boats, and the burial customs of the Carolina natives. These neoclassical Indians were thought such fit illustrations of the Indian in general that the De Bry plates subsequently adorned Captain John Smith's *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England and the Summer Isles* (1624) and even appeared in slightly modified form as late as 1705 in Robert Beverly's *History and Present State of Virginia*. Thus the heritage of the lost colony of Roanoke and the legendary Virginia Dare proved to be of two sorts: one, the peril of colony making in the new land; and two, the classical portrait of the Indian in the colonial period.³⁹

By the time of the founding of Jamestown in 1607, therefore, the English, whether as promoters of colonization, founders of the Virginia Company, or as adventurers to the new colony, all thought they knew what Indians were like, how they looked and behaved, and what could be expected from them. Small wonder their expectations were fulfilled. Did these images even predetermine their actions in early encounters? Their terminology and descriptions all indicate that the English saw Indians according to the twin criteria of Christianity and civilization. The Native Americans of the Jamestown area also probably had some images of the Whites from previous contact or at least hearsay from the Roanoke colony. Perhaps in this way both sides exhibited behavior that confirmed previous stereotypes of each other.⁴⁰

Once again one of the first impressions was of hospitality, but as English adventurers and Indian leaders competed over land and power cautious cooperation turned to outright conflict. As one gentleman observed as early as 1607: "The [native] people used our men well untill they found they began to plant & fortifye, Then they fell to skirmishing & kyllled 3 of our people."⁴¹ The most in-

formative and certainly the most voluminous reports on the numerous tribes of the Jamestown area came from the pen of Captain John Smith. In his many self-advertisements he tells of how he adopted a policy of striking fear into the native population in order to coerce their respect and their help in colony **building**. Although predisposed to see the bad side of Indian character and custom, Smith nevertheless presented an ambiguous picture of the Indian to his readers. If, on the one hand, they appeared "inconstant in everie thing, but what feare constraineth them to keepe," they also were "**craftie**, timorous, quicke of apprehension & very **ingenuous**."⁴² While Smith carefully differentiated the various tribes in contact with the English on the James, he characterized them all as Indians in his description and therefore perpetuated the general category in English minds at the same time as he presented the dual evaluation of that **category**.⁴³

How both images served the needs of the English may be seen in the **pamphlet** of Alexander Whitaker, a minister in Henrico, **Virginia**, who urged his fellow countrymen to support the philanthropic impulse in the colony for both base and high motives in his *Goode Newes from Virginia (1613)*. To prove the natives needed conversion, he resorted to the image of the bad Indian:

. . . let the miserable condition of these naked slaves of the **divell** move you to compassion toward them. They acknowledge that there is a great good God, but know him not, having the eyes of their understanding as yet blinded: wherefore they serve the divell for feare, after a most base manner, **sacrificing** sometimes (as I have heere heard) their own Children to him. . . . Their priests . . . are no other but such as our English witches are. They live naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering: Their names are as naked as their bodie: They esteem it a virtue to lie, deceive and steale as their master the **divell** teacheth to them.

On the other hand, to prove them capable of conversion, Whitaker stressed the favorable aspects of Indian character and custom:

But if any of us should misdoubt that this barbarous people is incapable of such heavenly mysteries, let such men know that they are farre mistaken in the nature of these men, for the promise of God, which is without respect to persons, made as well to **unwise** men after the flesh, as to the wise, **&c.** let us not thinke that these men are so simple as some have supposed them: for they are of bodie **lustie**, strong, and very nimble: They are a very understand-

peoples broadly **conceived**.⁴⁹ Humanist scholars endowed the old image of mythical Europa with new secular characteristics in tune with their times and what they considered her place in history. The basic **attributes** ascribed to continents showed most vividly in the symbolic pictures applied to **title** pages and to maps, but the same meaning lay behind the more prosaic written descriptions and discourses on the peoples of the world. Europeans portrayed their own Continent in terms of intellectual, cultural, military, and political superiority, for Europa was usually pictured wearing a crown, armed with guns, holding orb **and** scepter, and handling or surrounded by scientific instruments, pallets, books, and Christian symbols. While Asia was richly dressed, rarely did she possess superior signs of power, learning, or religion. America and Africa appeared naked, and the former usually wore a feathered headdress and carried a bow and arrow. Europe, in brief, represented civilization and Christianity and learning confronting nature in America (see Plate 4).⁵⁰

The general terms *heathen*, *barbarian*, *pagan*, *savage*, and even *Indian* revealed these criteria of **judgment** at the same time that they validated the use of collective terms for the peoples of other continents. The European takeover of the New World proved to Europeans, at least, their own superiority and confirmed the reliability of the classification of peoples by continents. Common concepts combined with successful conquest reinforced the general impression of the deficiency of primitives everywhere and validated the continuation of the general conception and the glossing over of the growing knowledge of specific social and **cultural** differences among New World peoples. Even among themselves and the peoples they had long known well, Europeans correlated whole nationalities with uniform moral and intellectual **attributes**; it should be no surprise that they should stereotype the new peoples they met elsewhere. If Shakespeare had his Caliban to symbolize New World savagery, he also had his Shylock, his Othello, as well as his Irishmen, Turks, Italians, and others to appeal to his **audiences' preconceptions**.⁵¹

Part of this stereotyping of national as well as continental characteristics must be ascribed to the confusion among the realms of culture and biology, nation and race prevalent then and until recently in Western thought. Lifestyles, bloodlines, and national boundaries were all mixed together in White analysis of humankind. Until social heritage and biological heredity were separated in the twentieth century, national character, racialism, and culture were confused and therefore blended together, whether of nations or of continents. Al-

though as time passed the relations among environment, biology, and culture might be seen as dynamic, with each being the cause as well as the effect of the others, their confusion due to imprecise delineation and misunderstanding of the mechanism of transmission meant that **race** and national character studies were the same thing until very recent times. Nations, races, and cultures were all basically seen as one interchangeable category for the understanding of peoples, and individuals were usually judged as members of their collectivity rather than as different, separate humans. Therefore, general terms embracing stereotyped characteristics made sense to Whites and could exist alongside knowledge of specific societies with individual characteristics or of individuals with varying qualities.

One important consequence of this style of thought was the continuance of the general term *Indian*. The use of the general term demanded a definition, and this **definition** was provided by moral qualities as well as by description of customs. In short, character and culture were united into one summary judgment. The definition and characterization of *Indian* as a general term constitutes the subject proper of this book as opposed to the history of the evolution of images and conceptions of specific tribes. The basic question to be asked of such overall White Indian imagery and conception is not, therefore, why its invention in the first place but why its continuance, or perpetuation, for so many succeeding centuries? To what extent do these old approaches to the *Indian* still constitute the chief White views of Native Americans even today?

Persisting Fundamental Images and Themes

THE CENTURIES-LONG CONFUSION and melding of what seem to us **fundamentally** different, even incorrect, ways of understanding human societies account for several persistent practices found throughout the history of White interpretation of Native Americans as **Indians**: (1) generalizing **from** one tribe's society and culture to all Indians, (2) conceiving of Indians in terms of their deficiencies according to White ideals rather than in terms of their own various

cultures, and (3) using moral evaluation as description of **Indians**.⁵²

Not only does the general term *Indian* continue from **Columbus** to the present day, but so also does the tendency to speak of one tribe as exemplary of all Indians and conversely to comprehend a specific tribe according to the characteristics **ascribed** to all Indians. That almost no account in the sixteenth century portrays systematically **or** completely the customs and beliefs of any one tribe probably results from the newness of the encounter and the feeling that all Indians **possessed** the same basic **qualities**.⁵³ Although eyewitness accounts and discourses by those who had lived among Native Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries often describe in detail the lives of a specific tribe or tribes, they also in the end generalize from this knowledge to all Indians. The famous reporters on Native American cultures in the colonial **period** of the United States, for example, **invariably** treated their **tribe** (s) as similar enough to all other Indians in customs and beliefs to serve as illustrations of that race in thought and **deed**.⁵⁴ Even in the century that saw the rise of professional anthropology, most social scientists as well **as** their White **countrymen** continued to speak and write as if a specific tribe and all Indians **were** interchangeable for the purposes of description and understanding of fundamental cultural dynamics and social **organization**.⁵⁵ Today, most Whites who use the word *Indian* have little idea of specific tribal peoples or individual **Native** Americans to render their usage much more than an abstraction, if not a stereotype. Even White writers on the history of White images of the Indian tend to treat all Native American cultures **as** a single **Indian one** for the purposes of analyzing the validity of White **stereotypes**.⁵⁶

Another persistent theme in White imagery is the tendency to describe Indian life in terms of its lack of White ways rather than being described positively from **within** the framework of the specific culture under consideration. Therefore, tribal Americans were usually described not as they were in their own eyes but from the **viewpoint** of outsiders, who often **failed** to understand their ideas or customs. Images of the Indian, accordingly, were (and are) usually what he was not or had not in White terms, rather than in terms of individual tribal cultures and social systems as modern anthropologists aim to **do**.⁵⁷ This negative prototype of the deficient Indian began **with** Columbus but continues into the present as any history of the White education of Native Americans reveals. To this day such education is still too often treated as philanthropy to the "culturally deprived" **Indian**.⁵⁸

Description by deficiency all too readily led to characterization by evaluation, and so most of the White studies of Indian **culture(s)** were (and are) also examinations of Indian moral character. Later White understanding of the Indian, like that of earlier explorers and settlers, expressed moral judgments upon lifestyles as well as presented their description, or mixed ideology with ethnography, to use modern terms. Ethnographic description according to modern standards could not truly be separated from ideology and moral judgment until *both* cultural pluralism and moral relativism were accepted as ideals. Not until well into the twentieth century did such acceptance become general among intellectuals, and even then only a few Whites truly practiced the two ideals in their outlook on Native Americans. Thus eyewitness description prior to this century and so much still in our time combines moral evaluation with ethnographic detail, and moral judgments all too frequently passed for science in the past according to present-day understanding. If ideology was fused with ethnography in firsthand sources, then those images held by Whites **who** never had experience with Native Americans were usually little more than stereotype and moral judgment.

Whether describing physical appearance or character, manners or morality, economy or dress, housing or sexual habits, government or religion, Whites overwhelmingly measured the Indian as a general category against those beliefs, values, or institutions they most cherished in themselves at the time. For this reason, many commentators on the history of White Indian imagery see Europeans and Americans as using counterimages of themselves to describe Indians and the **counterimages** of Indians to describe **themselves**.⁵⁹ Such a negative reference group could be used to define White **identity**⁶⁰ or to prove White superiority over the worst fears of their own depravity. If the Puritans, for example, could project their own sins upon people they called savages, then the extermination of the Indian became a cleansing of those sins from their own midst as well as the destruction of a **feared enemy**.⁶¹

Since White views of Indians are inextricably bound up with the evaluation of their own society and culture, then ambivalence of Europeans and Americans over the worth of their own customs and civilization would show up in their appraisal of Indian **life**. Even with the image of the Indian as a reverse or negative model of White life, two different conclusions about the quality of Indian existence can be drawn. That Indians lacked certain or all aspects of White civilization could be viewed as bad or good depending upon the observer's feel-

ings about his own society and the use to which he wanted to put the image. In line with this possibility, commentators upon the history of White imagery of the Indian have found two fundamental but contradictory conceptions of Indian **culture**.⁶²

In general and at the risk of oversimplifying some four centuries of imagery, the **good** Indian appears friendly, courteous, and hospitable to the initial invaders of his lands and to all Whites so long as the latter honored the obligations presumed to be mutually entered into with the tribe. Along with handsomeness of physique and physiognomy went great stamina and endurance. Modest in attitude if not always in dress, the noble Indian exhibited great calm and dignity in bearing, conversation, and even under torture. Brave in combat, he was tender in love for family and children. Pride in himself and independence of other persons combined with a plain existence and wholesome enjoyment of nature's gifts. According to this version, the Indian, in short, lived a life of liberty, simplicity, and innocence.

On the other side, a list of almost contradictory traits emerged of the bad Indian in White eyes. Nakedness and lechery, passion and vanity led to lives of polygamy and sexual promiscuity among themselves and constant warfare and fiendish revenge against their enemies. When habits and customs were not brutal they appeared loathsome to Whites. Cannibalism and human sacrifice were the worst sins, but cruelty to captives and incessant warfare ranked not far behind in the estimation of Whites. Filthy surroundings, inadequate cooking, and certain items of diet **repulsive** to White taste tended to confirm a low opinion of Indian life. Indolence rather than industry, improvidence in the face of scarcity, thievery and treachery added to the list of traits on this side. Concluding the bad version of the Indian were the power of superstition represented by the "conjurers" and "medicine men," the hard **slavery** of women and the laziness of men, and even timidity or defeat in the face of White advances and weaponry. Thus this list substituted license for liberty, a harsh lot for simplicity, and dissimulation and deceit for innocence.

Along with the persistence of the dual image of good and bad but **general** deficiency overall went a curious timelessness in defining the Indian proper. In spite of centuries of contact and the changed conditions of Native American lives, Whites picture the "real" Indian as the one before contact or during the early period of that contact. That Whites of earlier centuries should see the Indian as without history makes sense given their lack of knowledge about the past of

Native American peoples and the shortness of their encounter. That later Whites should harbor the same assumption seems surprising given the discoveries of archeology and the changed condition of the tribes as the result of White contact and policy. Yet most Whites still conceive of the "real" Indian as the aborigine he once was, or as they imagine he once was, rather than as he **is** now. White Europeans and Americans expect even at present to see an Indian out of the forest or a Wild West show rather than on farm or in city, and far too many anthropologists still present this image by describing aboriginal cultures in what they call the "ethnographic **present**,"⁶³ or as if tribes live today as they once did. Present-day historians of the United States, likewise, omit the Indian entirely after the colonial period or the last battles on the Plains for the same reason. If Whites do not conceive of themselves still living as Anglo-Saxons, Gauls, or Teutons, then why should they expect Indians to be unchanged from aboriginal times, Native Americans ask of their White **peers**?⁶⁴

If Whites of the early period of contact invented the Indian as a conception and provided its fundamental meaning through imagery, why did later generations perpetuate that conception and imagery without basic alteration although Native Americans changed? The answer to this question must be sought partially in the very contrast presumed between Red and White society that gave rise to the idea of the Indian in the first place. Since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, then civilization and Indianness as they defined them would forever be opposites. Only civilization had history and dynamics in this view, so therefore Indianness must be conceived of as ahistorical and static. If the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he was no longer truly Indian according to the image, because the Indian was **judged** by what Whites were not. Change toward what Whites were made him ipso facto less Indian.

The history of White-Indian contact increasingly proved to Whites, particularly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that civilization and Indianness were inherently incompatible and verified the initial conception that gave rise to the imagery. Death through disease and warfare decimated the aboriginal population in the face of White advance and gave rise by the time of the American Revolution to the idea of the vanishing race. If Whites regarded the Indian as a threat to life and morals when alive, they **regarded** him with nostalgia upon his **demise—or** when that threat was safely past.

Indians who remained alive and who resisted adoption of **civiliza-**

tion appeared to accept White vices instead of virtues and so became those imperfect creatures, the degraded or reservation Indian. If there is a third major White image of the Indian, then this degraded, often drunken, Indian constitutes the essence of that understanding. Living neither as an assimilated White nor an Indian of the classic image, and therefore neither noble nor wildly savage **but** always scorned, the degraded Indian exhibited the vices of both societies in the opinion of White observers. Degenerate and poverty-stricken, these unfortunates were presumed to be outcasts from their own race, who exhibited the worse qualities of Indian character with none of its redeeming features. Since White commentators pitied when they did not scorn this degenerate Indian, the image carried the same unfavorable evaluation overall as the bad or ignoble Indian.

Complete assimilation would have meant the total disappearance of Indianness. If one adds to these images the conceptions of progress and evolution, then one arrives at the fundamental premises behind much of White understanding of the Indian from about the middle of the eighteenth century to very recent **times**. Under these conceptions civilization was destined to triumph over savagery, and so the Indian was to disappear either through death or through assimilation into the larger, more progressive White society. For White Americans during this long period of time, the only good Indian was indeed a dead **Indian—whether** through warfare or through **assimilation**.⁶⁵ Nineteenth-century frontiersmen acted upon this **premise**; missionaries and philanthropists tried to cope with the fact. In the twentieth century anthropologists rushed to salvage ethnography from the last living members left over from the ethnographic present, and historians treated Indians as "dead" after early contact with Whites. In these ways modern Native Americans and their contemporary lifestyles have largely disappeared from the White **imagination—unless** modern Indian activism reverses this historic trend for longer than the recurring but transitory White enthusiasm **for** things Indian.

That the White image of the **Indian** is doubly timeless in its assumption of the **atemporality** of Indian life and its enduring judgment of deficiency does not mean that the imagery as a whole does not have its own history. The problem is **how** to show both the continuity and the changes in the **imagery**. Ideally such a history would embody both **(1)** what changed, what persisted, and why, and **(2)** what images were held by whom, when, **where**, and why. On the whole, **scholars** of the topic attempt only one or the other of these approaches and adopt quite different strategies in doing so. One

group traces the imagery in the cultural context and intellectual history of a nation or of Western civilization. The other group examines the socioeconomic forces and vested interests of White individuals and groups. To oversimplify somewhat, the first group of scholars sees the imagery as a reflection of White cultures and as the primary explanation of White behavior *vis-à-vis* Native Americans, while the second group understands the imagery to be dependent upon the political and economic relationships prevailing in White societies at **various** times. Usually the former concentrates upon imagery and ideas, and the latter emphasizes policy and actual behavior toward Native **Americans**. As a result of these differences in attention and explanation, nowhere does one find a comprehensive history of White imagery.⁸⁶

If the remarkable thing about the idea of the Indian is not its invention but its persistence and perpetuation, then the task of this book becomes one of delineating that continuity in spite of seeming changes in intellectual and political currents and alterations in social and economic institutions. Accordingly, Part Two searches beneath the "**scientific**" conception of the Indian as it moves from premises in Christian cosmogony to modern anthropology for the familiar imagery. Part Three examines the persistence of the dual imagery of the Indian in imaginative and ideological literature **and** art despite changing intellectual and political climates. The last part turns to the continuing use of the basic Indian imagery to justify White public and private policies and actual dealings with Native Americans as political regimes altered and economic institutions changed.