

## **15. WAR AND CAPTIVITY IN COLONIAL NEW ENGLAND (4/01/04)**

### **Guns and war**

New England colonies full record. Different aspects much studied.

With Indians, much on war, captivity.

Settler colonies like New England worldwide have bad record of harming native populations.

They are less interested than some colonists in controlling and exploiting Indians. We now know that there was more slaving of Indians than thought---shows how understanding changes---esp. in southern colonies. Puritans also some use of Indian labor.

But indigenous labor was not foundation of colonial economy. More interested in Indian lands.

New England, New Zealand, Australia, Tasmania, Argentina, in different ways had terrible record of displacement and mistreatment or extermination of native populations.

In New England, as Cronon and Taylor show, there were several decades of usually peaceful interaction, co-existence. Trade, selling land, some labor.

They even lived together for brief periods, New England Algonkians too refuge from the Mohawks with colonists.

Some areas better than average Indian relations, Rhode Island, also with a Pilgrim rebel, named Morton.

But continuing tension and possibilities for trouble. Some would say just matter of time until war.

In particular, great population growth in settler population, decline in Indian population, continuing incremental dispossession of land. Also in effect bullying Indians. unstable situation.

### **Guns and military tactics**

One might think that understanding of military technology, tactics, strategy would be one of best established historical points.

In fact controversies. Even with very intensively studied wars---Civil War, World War I---enduring controversies.

We know that technology and tactics often very important. Importance of repeating rifles, machine gun to late imperialism. "Light" weapons like AK47s today.

But also cultural dimension, not inevitable. Famous claim that Japanese delayed use of firearms for long time because they would wreck the Samurai system.

For North American Indians, several recent positions, disputes.

Very revealing about nature of historical enterprise.

One recent position historian, Michael Bellesisles, made radical claims.

Said gun culture late to develop in White America. Charlton Heston and others very upset, critical. But won major historical prize, much acclaim.

Then some began cast doubt on validity, even truth of evidence. Said some records used in research were distorted, even non-existent. Investigations, and the award was retracted. Major academic scandal.

Concerning Indians, Bellesisles suggests guns may have hurt their cause: they were adopted for reasons of prestige, copycats, would have done better to stick to bow.

Guns had strong psychological impact, but much less after all Indians adopted them. Bow was quieter, faster, and esp. not tied to white supplies of ammunition. Guns were expensive, hard to load. (Daniel Day Lewis in "Last of the Mohicans" grossly misleading.) Guns misfired, bad on rainy days. Whites palmed off bad guns on Indians. Unclear how to assess these claims.

Another position, Patrick Malone, *Skulking Way of War* (on list of recommended books). Others before him. Emphasized impact of guns, intelligent Indian use of guns, eventual impact on colonial war-making.

Malone says guns couldn't be dodged, made horrendous wounds.

Indian bows not as powerful as English longbows, couldn't pierce armor.

So two opposed positions, both plausible, hard for us to assess.

Malone also analyses adoption of guns.

Colonial worries about Indians getting guns, there were laws prohibiting, but were subverted, exceptions made. Indians wanted guns for intertribal wars, hunting.

Indians also learned technology: already very adept with copper, flint-working. Making lead shot easy.

Indians learned to repair guns, to blacksmith. One major problem was powder. Even colonists did not make powder themselves. So notion that powder supply major weakness for Indians, esp. in protracted wars, correct.

Indians, according to Malone, also very fussy about kinds of guns.

Two kinds of gun at time: Matchlocks, older technology. Heavy, inaccurate, smoldering match. Saw in "Black Robe".

Flintlocks newer, expensive, but much better.

Colonists stuck with matchlocks, but Indians insisted on flintlocks. Colonists very bad in use, Indians became experts.

Also Indians more effective, according to this view in forest warfare.

Traditionally, mixed methods.

Some fights in open, masses of men, showers of arrows, low casualties.

Stockades, with sieges and ambushes.

Especially forest fighting, with ambushes.

Colonists saw forest fighting as entirely random, individual---shows dangers of historical testimony---but some say Indians had well worked-out tactics.

In first major colonial conflict, King Phillip's War, according to this view, colonialists at first blundered around, tried to use European tactics, not adapted to forest. Indians much more effective, skulking, ambushing.

Then Whites did better as they adopted Indian patterns, learned about forest, adopted ranger or guerrilla pattern. Sounds plausible.

Now third view. Guy Chet (see supplementary reading list.)

Says in fact previous view misinterpreted record.

Says that understanding distorted by self-serving memoirs of most famous colonial ranger, who exaggerated his own exploits and the significance of ranger patterns.

Chet says that many Indian successes came much more from attacks on lightly defended western towns; that scorched earth tactics, destruction of subsistence base crucial.

And that battles and defensive tactics much more important than previously claimed.

Colonists' major weakness was not their use European war patterns but their incompetence in implementing them.

At very beginning of colonization, professional soldiers like Myles Standish were very effective, but within a few years, militia was mostly sloppy, untrained.

Concerning battles, previous interpretations had often emphasized attack: initial volley with guns, then run in, fight with edged weapons.

Chet says campaigns were *strategically* offense, but effective battle-fighting was *tactically* defensive: so long as colonial troops held ranks and were fairly well trained, traditional European patterns won battles.

Even if e.g. they were chasing enemy, once engaged in battle, goal was to make them attack you, destroy them from defensive position.

Can see that very different picture altogether of what was going on, what worked.

Very hard for non-experts to assess evidence. Shows complications of historical interpretation, even on what seem basic points.

### **Pequot War**

In 1637 first Indian war, brief but nasty. After series of disturbances, combined Puritan-Pilgrim force moved against Pequots, Algonkians. Fortified village where Mystic, Connecticut is now. Guided by Indian allies, enemies of Pequots

Surrounded fort, invaded at dawn, complete surprise, lit whole village on fire, as Indians ran out, massacred. Inner ring militia, outer Indian allies.

Killed women and children, maybe total 400.

Puritans justified in Biblical terms, little remorse.

They thought they assured peace by smashing the Pequot, object lesson for other Indians, but effect the opposite. Indians learned to fear colonists and to understand that if war came, it would be total.

### **King Phillip's War**

Great colonial war later in century.

Many books, articles. Much studied.

For long time blamed on Indians, but near-unanimity in 20<sup>th</sup> century that they the victims.

Some say primary villains were the Plymouth colony, more insecure about land and position because separate from Mass Bay Colony and Rhode Island and its charter was threatened. Made them nervous about Indians to west of Plymouth, whether they would sell to other Puritans, harm Plymouth.

Famous friendly Indian Massasoit had died, his successor Wamsutta (name of mills, towels) captured, hauled into Plymouth, because they were worried he selling land to others. He died on way home, not happy event.

His successor, Metacom, called Philip by Pilgrims, was hauled in, tried to make him agree never to sell to any other settlers. They coerced him into agreement, but Phillip was mad, perhaps plotting. A "praying Indian" informed on Phillip; informer killed, there was a quick trial for 3 accused Indians, one of whom fingered Phillip.

War started 1675. Spread all over New England. Used to be depicted as Indian conspiracy, but rather disconnected series of uprisings, often provoked by colonists. Phillip definitely not in charge of whole thing.

Colonists do badly at first. Unprepared for forest war.

Great fear of all Indians, including "praying Indians" and allies. Interned praying Indians on Deer Island.

One result, blundered about without guides, easily ambushed. Exception was Connecticut colonists, who used Indian allies.

Indians abandoned restraint, killed without mercy. Also western settlements exposed, very vulnerable.

Colonists soon began selling captives as slaves off to West Indies, didn't improve tone of war. Indians ransomed white captives back, that was interpreted to show that they were barbaric!

By 1676 Mass Bay leaders began to realize mistake, started using praying Indians and allies. Just a few scouts to keep them out of traps made a huge difference.

Many Indians had not joined in or on fence. Puritans got them on board. Also got Mohawk to harry them from west. No unity among Indians.

Started doing better in forest war.

No mercy, attack neutrals. Most of all scorched earth, destroy subsistence. Indians starving, then epidemics.

Crucial white advantages: secure base, with sea at back, reinforcements. Able to destroy Indian fields, keep them on run

Result was Indian resistance destroyed. Great part of population died, shipped off as slaves. A few descendants, but weak remnants, pockets.

Tremendous losses among whites before won. By percentage of population, worst war in North American history.

First great Indian war, start of long shameful history.

### **Captivity**

Interactions between two sides, as have already seen, not just economic and political but meaningful

Include missionization, marriage and sex, torture, killing, capture---all full of meaning.

Try to make sense of what going on; trying to impose meanings on it.

Also using certain events and customs and supposed character traits to stand for important meanings about the other, or to handle contradictions or ideological dilemmas  
Also been argued that figure out own identity---collective identity as people---through contrast with others

Certain things charged with symbolism and meaning

Saw with killing and torture in movie, with Jesuits

Also captivity. Both sides taking captives, but was mostly whites captured by Indians that emphasized

Very beginning: John Smith, supposed rescue by Pocahontas, is a captivity story

### **The Indian slave trade**

Great imbalance. Many more Indians captured, and part of a commercial trade.

But no big deal made of it.

Esp. in South in earliest period.

Full extent just now being realized. (See book in supplementary reading list.)

See Taylor in chapter on Carolinas. To get guns, Indians drawn in as slave raiders.

Would seem to indicate that Europeans saw Indians as radically different, but Colley argues that merely extension of what did in Europe: Cromwell packed defeated Irish rebels off to W. Indies.

Also slaving and captivity during New England Indian wars

“Praying Indians” suspected of throwing lot in with rebels packed off to Deer island, where sewage plant now is. Very like Japanese internment. Great suffering.

Also captured Indians packed off to West Indies as slaves. Huge deal made of two Puritan girls briefly captured in Pequot War, then Pequots who survived all sent off with relatively little fuss.

But Colley argues that quite significant numbers of whites captured, not at all rare:

On frontier further south, over ten-year period, 1755-1765, 2700 whites taken

No one knows total numbers

### **White captives**

Captivity is a charged event. Full of meaning. Very emotional to write and think about.

Not just interaction between two sides, but one taken inside, taken over by other.

Intimate, powerful.

About national and ethnic differences; ethnicity, race; power; gender

We see in own time. In 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous examples: prisoners of war (literature of Allies in Germany; movies on prisoners of Japanese; now attention to internment of Japanese in U.S.); Iranian prisoners and Contragate: Patty Hearst; Aldo Moro; others.

New book by Linda Colley (see supplementary reading list) on Europeans who captured by North African corsairs, made slaves; British captives in India; as well as in colonial North America.

First important white captive to write about experience was Mary Rowlandson, what you have been reading. Became hugely important: being read in at least one other course this Spring.

Rowlandson narrative cannot be read just for events it tells us about, must be seen as text imposing meanings on the events

Started tradition of captivity narratives. Other Puritan ones, more tightly controlled by Puritan preachers than Rowlandson's. Then many more. Industry. Some were fakes. In way fakes just as revealing as real ones of ideology.

Absorbed into literature. Cooper's novels heavily influenced.

Great fascination. Study by historians, students of literature.

Agreement that very important, that about race and gender and power

But strikingly different takes on subject, shows how difficult and subjective.

### **Rowlandson's Story**

Religion informing story at multiple levels:

Providence, God's will explaining events.

Even when not rescued.

Her use of Bible as divination, tool to understand situation.

For Rowlandson, the story is a kind of "conversion" narrative or testimonial. Story of testing by experience, how changed.

For preachers, was form of narrative of the wonder's of God's providence. Cotton Mather published providential stories, even people involved in witch craze.

She and colonists as a whole deserve punishment. Her pride/vanity. Puritans fallen into sin. But still infinitely better than Indians. Strange combination of pride and self-doubt.

How structured? "removes" Is there a symbolic significance to word?

Suggested kind of displacement, like Biblical exile. Puritans already prone to metaphorizing selves as Israelites among enemy peoples in desert.

Are there issues that Rowlandson is trying to deal with in story? Anything she is trying not to say or that she is saying did not occur?

Lepore says important that she feels guilt over letting self be captured.

Showing that had not been touched sexually. (As noted with "Black Robe", eastern Indians seldom used captives sexually, unless later married them; not so in West.)

Important she let readers know.

Even more that she had not "gone Indian", converted to their way of life. Felt as danger. Remarks on how hated food.

One male captive who punished when recaptured. Suspected of treachery or at least not resisting.

Within general Indian badness, what are Weetamoo's faults? Suggested she counterpart of Rowlandson, sin that Rowlandson must struggle against.

Colley and Lepore suggest that also positive affirmation that still English.

Also, insistent contrast between Indians and English, it has been suggested, is not just static reflection of already existing attitudes---it is also an active part of process by which Indians "othered", i.e. portrayed as totally different, bad. Text as part of process.

Are there ways that Rowlandson loses control of her story or that it is not all consistent?

Some good or partially good Indians. Quinnapin Even bad individuals suggest that they vary, not all same. Examples of kindness.

What besides Indian goodness subverts message, portrayal of Indians as totally alien?

At one point she mistakes them for whites, because dressed like whites.

She enters into economic relations with them.

She knows some of them from before, knows some Indian words. Suggests inter-relationships, not total separation.

Who are the important individual Indians in story?

Philip, Quinnapin, Weetamoo.

She doesn't give reader full political significance of their roles or hers.

She not ordinary captive, wife of preacher.

Weetamoo was widow of an important chief and herself a leader. When she died, her body was displayed as trophy just as with killed male Indian leaders.

Rowlandson criticizes Weetamoo for dressing up and gifts etc., doesn't seem to realize this was part of ceremonies for chiefs. Not that Rowlandson didn't know she was leader, certainly knew very well by time wrote narrative, but damned if she was going to acknowledge it.

What does it mean that Rowlandson was a woman? Almost everyone who comments says important, but interpret it in different ways.

Colley points out that captivity narratives of prisoners of Barbary pirates mostly men, preceded American narratives and some of those who helped publish Rowlandson probably knew Barbary narratives. But significant in this case that families, women and children.

Highly unusual for woman to write or publish, or for that matter, even to speak in public. Only 4 women in whole 18<sup>th</sup> century were ever published, Rowlandson only one during her own lifetime.

Very strong insistence on women's silence.

Rowlandson special case because wife of preacher, preface justified it that way.

May be that woman good symbol in some ways, passive, can represent Puritan self threatened by the other/the wilderness/the world. But to extent she portrayed as resisting, may be conflict with gender role.

One famous later story, woman who kills and scalps captors, became famous, but over top, not in gender role.

Also famous story, Mary Jemison, stays with Seneca, has much positive to say about them, subversive.

So many critics concerned with complicated relations between male/female, Indian/English. Also with sexuality, even if nothing overt occurred.

May also have factual element: Men much much more likely to be killed rather than kept in captivity.

Jill Lepore contrasts Samuel Printer, "Praying" Indian who set Rowlandson's story in type. He captivity on Deer Island. When released, had to prove loyalty, redeem self. So symmetry with Rowlandson. But she did with story, not open to him. Indian side silence. Rather had to bring scalps.

Colley shows how captivity literature not very important in England until later, 18<sup>th</sup> century, when British troops in considerable numbers for French and Indian war. Then savagery literature, deal with brutality of colonial war, Indian strongly othered.

### **The threat of captives going Indian**

Axtell wrote very interesting chapter on this (see supplementary reading list).

Quite a few white captives wanted to stay with Indians, didn't want to return.

Particularly enjoyed relative freedom of Indian society. Moccasins as symbol, much more comfortable and flexible than boots.

Ordeal through which captives put, which could end for lucky in incorporation, acceptance, could bind them emotionally.

Very upsetting to families, to settler society when they didn't want to go back.

Danger of going native confronts all colonial societies.

### **French-English captive conversion struggles**

Also crisis with captives who turned over to French in Canada, converted to Catholicism.

Didn't become Indians but renounced Protestantism, English identity.

Series of colonial wars between French and English, captives taken by both side imp part of struggle

Analyzed by Axtell (see supplementary reading list)

Says 1600 taken captive by French between late 17<sup>th</sup> and late 18<sup>th</sup> century

Contest between cultures. See Demos (supplementary reading list)

Both sides saw captives won over as crucial test

But New England had weaker missionary tradition. Also most of French captives single men. Not needed in New England, so weak efforts to convert

In New France could really use captives to stay, esp. women and men with skills

Major effort on French side. Some coercion. But also what Moonies have called love bombing: previous converts esp. zealous and persuasive.

Prisoners grateful to be freed from Indians, in hands of whites. A number fell in love while there. They knew trip back could be rough. Proved vulnerable to conversion without own ministers to help resist. Tough, theologically knowledgeable adults held out best, kids push-overs.

Very upsetting back home to know that kin had become Catholic.

See discussion questions on Rowlandson's narrative.