

of the United States as an actor on the world stage. It does not devote much attention to battles or to military history at the operational level; rather, it investigates wars as defining moments in the construction of cultural and territorial borders, in North America and beyond. It argues that wars—not only as fought but also as contemplated, criticized, defended, and remembered—have furnished crucial occasions for Americans to debate who they are and to express what they hope their nation represents. It maintains, finally, that the quest for liberty and the pursuit of power together have created an American historical dialectic catalyzed and made dynamic by war.

The Dominion of War, in short, attempts to describe anew certain fundamental patterns of development and important sources of change over the *longue durée* of North America's past, and thus to renarrate a tale we may too easily assume we know, with a significance we may too readily believe we understand. It tells of a continent's shaping and a nation's growth: a chronicle that begins in war, and ends—with us.

FROM Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton,
The Dominion of War, Empire and Liberty
 in North America, 1500-2000.
 New York: Viking, 2005.

CHAPTER ONE

Champlain's Legacy: The Transformation of Seventeenth-Century North America

He was awake now, but could not shake the dream from his mind. He had stood with his companions at the foot of a mountain, on a narrow shore, by a lake of sparkling beauty. Yet there was only horror in what he beheld: everywhere before him men struggled in the water, gasping for breath, dying. To the others he had said, We must save them. But they replied, Let them die. They are Iroquois, our enemies. They are worth nothing.

And so, one by one, they drowned.¹

The man who woke from this nightmare was Samuel de Champlain, and the lake by which he slept we now call by his name. It was July 29, 1609. He and two French musketeers were accompanying sixty Montagnais, Huron, and Algonquin warriors on an expedition against the Mohawks, easternmost of the Five Nations of the Iroquois. The Frenchmen, the first Europeans to see the lake and the country around it, were also among the first Europeans ever to join an Indian war party as combatants. Before nightfall on the following day, Champlain's new allies discovered that his dream had been a prophetic vision. What they could not know was that their victory over the Mohawks marked a turning point in North American history.

No more a seer than his allies, Champlain, too, failed to grasp the significance of the battle he helped win. He had, after all, come to North America to trade and perhaps to save some souls, not to fight in local wars. In pursuing those ostensibly benign goals, however, Champlain came to

understand that the goodwill of his trading partners depended on his willingness to join them against their enemies. The more he learned about Indians, in short, the more he found himself pressed to participate in their wars.

In deciding to become an active ally, Champlain responded to the exigencies of the moment. But when he placed his weapons and his skills at the disposal of his allies, he inaugurated a pattern of interaction among French and Indian peoples that persisted for a century and a half. Champlain thus played both a symbolic and a causal role in changing the cultural and political landscape of eastern North America. For the previous century, European contacts had altered but not transformed native patterns of war and trade. Now, however, the creation of colonies in North America intensified the long-standing competition among native groups and made the Indians' wars more violent and uncontrollable than they had ever been before.

These terrible transformations did not occur solely because a lone Frenchman decided to enlist himself and his matchlock musket in the service of an Indian war party. Nevertheless, because Champlain's career in North America spanned the transition between the sixteenth-century Age of Contact and the Age of Colonization and Conflict that followed, his story casts a powerful light on the unintended consequences of European-Indian interactions. In pursuing his dreams of trade and conversion, Champlain helped bring an old order to a violent end and made himself midwife to the nightmarish birth of a new era.

"I Wished to Help Them Against Their Enemies"

When Champlain dreamed of men drowning before his eyes in the summer of 1609, he was about forty years of age—old for war—and far from home. A circuitous route had led him from the town of his birth, Brouage, in the province of Saintonge, north of Bordeaux, to the spot where he slept, deep in the American forest.

We know nothing of his education, although it is clear that growing up in a port town had given him a chance both to learn how to sail small vessels and how to make excellent, accurate harbor charts. The interminable civil wars of his homeland had also given him, as a young man, the skills of a soldier. During the Franco-Spanish struggle known as the Eighth War of Religion (or the War of the Three Henrys, 1585–98), he served as a cavalry quartermaster in the army of Henri de Navarre. Such a post would ordinar-

ily have kept him out of the line of fire, yet late in 1594, at about age twenty-four, he took part in the storming of Fort Crozat, outside Brest. That act earned him a reputation for bravery; the battle secured northwestern France for Navarre, a Protestant who had lately converted to Catholicism in order to reunite a kingdom long riven by religious bloodshed. By 1598 Navarre had triumphed over his enemies and ascended the throne that he occupied as His Most Christian Majesty, Henri IV. With that, the brave young quartermaster who had taken to calling himself Samuel *de* Champlain (thereby granting himself a *noblesse* to which he had no particle of a claim), found himself out of a job.

He was not unemployed for long. His uncle commanded a merchant ship, the *Saint-Julien*, lately contracted to repatriate Spanish soldiers to Cadiz; he gave Champlain a berth as a junior officer on the voyage. At Cadiz his uncle hired out the *Saint-Julien*, "a staunch ship and a good sailer," once more—this time to sail with the *flota*, or annual convoy, that carried European goods to New Spain to exchange for the silver, cacao, and other riches of the Indies that it would bear home to Spain. Thus Champlain first crossed the Atlantic in 1599, beginning a fascination with the New World that led him back again and again. By 1635, when he died at Quebec, the *habitation* he founded in 1608, he had made the voyage at least a dozen times.²

Champlain did not return with the *flota*; instead, he lingered two years in the West Indies and Mexico. This sojourn fired his imagination and changed his life. New Spain—Mexico—in particular impressed him: "A more beautiful country," he thought, "could not be seen or desired." It was a rich country, too: a land of "fine forests" and "plains stretching as far as the eye can reach, covered with immense droves of cattle," its mines poured silver worth millions of pesos annually into the Spanish royal treasury. New Spain also charmed him with its natural wonders—exotic trees (including the guava, whose miraculous fruit had flesh that could stop diarrhea in two hours and skin that cured constipation "straightaway"), such amazing animals as the iguana and the jaguar, and birds of every description and hue. Most of all, the monumental scale and architecture of "the beautiful city of Mexico" captivated him. Here was a place "superbly constructed of splendid temples, palaces and fine houses," with "streets extremely well laid out" and lined with "handsome shops . . . full of all sorts of very rich merchandise"—a city, truly, that symbolized the power and wealth of the Spanish Indies.³

Only the natives disappointed him. Those not yet subjected to the king of Spain worshiped the moon, practiced cannibalism, and were "deprived of the light of reason." Those whom the Spanish did control, on the other

hand, had been so extensively persecuted, tortured, enslaved, and slain in the course of being subdued that "the mere account of it arouses compassion for them." They were Christians, of a sort; but they attended Mass less for the love of God than for fear of the beatings that priests inflicted on absentees. Doubtless as a result, Champlain found Mexico's Indians to be "of a very melancholy disposition," notwithstanding the "quick intelligence" that enabled them to "understand in a short time whatever is shown to them" and a remarkable fortitude in enduring "whatever ill-treatment or abuse is bestowed upon them."⁴

Champlain understood in a general way the historical events that had made New Spain into the land he so admired. He knew, for example, that it had been less than a century since Castilian conquerors had transformed the Valley of Mexico from the seat of the Aztec state into one of the principal bastions of Spain's globe-girdling empire. Like literate sixteenth-century Europeans generally, he also understood the decisive victory that Hernán Cortés and the conquistadors had achieved as proof that the Spanish were the greatest empire-builders since antiquity. What neither he nor any of his contemporaries understood, however, was the extraordinary degree to which Spain's triumph had depended upon the interplay between Aztec and Castilian ways of war and expectations about empire. Indeed, what had happened in Mexico during the years of the conquest, 1519–21, not only shaped the world Champlain described eighty years later but profoundly influenced the interactions between European colonizers and American peoples for centuries to come.

From a modest start in the Valley of Mexico during the fourteenth century, the Aztecs had built an imperial state and a large standing army on the foundation of a religious system that required human sacrifice and a political system geared to war and the exaction of tribute. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Aztecs, governing from the great metropolis Tenochtitlán, exercised hegemony over perhaps 12 million people across central Mexico, sustaining their power by extorting food, precious metals, textiles, and labor from subject peoples. Perpetual warfare set the bounds of this empire, for two reasons. The Aztec economy (even to the extent of provisioning Tenochtitlán's population of 200,000) depended on a steady supply of tribute, which could only be maintained by fear of military retribution; and the Aztec religious system demanded the blood of human beings to maintain the balance of the cosmos and insure that the sun would rise each day. By 1500 approximately 50,000 prisoners of war had to be taken annually to serve as sacrificial victims.

Cortés was a thirty-four-year-old lawyer discontented with the slow pace of his advancement in Cuba when he landed on the coast of Mexico, essentially as a freebooter, in 1519. Operating in defiance of his superior, Cuba's governor, he brought with him about five hundred soldiers, fourteen small cannon, a handful of horses, and little real idea of what he might encounter. Once this tiny force of would-be conquistadors demonstrated the military advantages of crossbows, gunpowder weapons, horses, and steel to the peoples they encountered near the coast, it was not particularly difficult for the Indians to see them as potentially useful allies against their Aztec enemy. Cortés, a brilliant practitioner of realpolitik, understood this well enough to ally himself with, first, the Cempoalans, and later (after initial clashes in which he and his armored men held their ground against massed formations of archers and slingsmen hurling stones) with the warlike Tlaxcalans. It was thus not merely a few hundred intrepid Castilians who conquered Tenochtitlán in 1521 but a few hundred Castilians in the company of perhaps 200,000 Indian allies. The conquest, as we now know, was effected less by technological and tactical superiority than by the support of these native warriors; it was ultimately secured by the devastating effects of the smallpox that the Spanish inadvertently introduced in the course of their invasion. Cortés and his men, however, concluded that the collapse of the Aztecs represented God's will and lost no time in inserting themselves in the place of the empire's previous rulers. Thus they were able to compensate themselves for the trouble of conquering Mexico by continuing to collect tribute through the existing system and to repay God for his help by instituting Christianity as the state religion.⁵

The benefits of escaping Aztec hegemony appealed so powerfully to the Indians who allied themselves with Cortés that they failed to see the consequences of alliance until the devastations of epidemic disease made it impossible for them to resist Spanish control. Meanwhile Cortés and the governors who succeeded him continued to use Indian labor to extract the silver that funded their conversion of the Aztecs' hegemonic empire into a territorial one, New Spain. The prolonged collapse of Mexico's Indian population eventually slowed and, after about a century, ceased; intermarriage between Spanish creoles and Indians produced the mestizo population that gradually increased until it finally predominated, stabilizing both the labor supply and cultural relations.

By the 1550s, Spanish rule was secure in central Mexico and the means of conquest were thoroughly understood; indeed, another conquistador, Francisco Pizarro, effectively replicated them in western South America by

taking over the Inca Empire, a feat of even greater audacity than that of Cortés. Having twice seen the face of success, the Spanish sought to repeat this pattern of conquest in subsequent efforts at colonization and imperial organization. Even in areas less well suited to the process than Mexico had been, would-be conquistadors sought alliance with indigenous peoples as a first step toward their subjugation, the collection of tribute, and an enforced conversion to Christianity. This was the case with Spain's first colony on the mainland to the north of Mexico, Saint Augustine. There, however, the attempt produced results substantially different from Spain's spectacular triumphs in Mexico and Peru.

Because the Spanish crown expended the wealth of conquered peoples largely to create a centralized empire, settlement expanded from Mexico according to strategic decisions made in Madrid. Imperial authorities quite reasonably assigned first priority to defending the treasure fleets that carried American bullion to the metropolis. Hence the decision to establish Saint Augustine in 1565 represented an attempt to secure the Atlantic coast of Florida against the Huguenot (French Protestant) buccaneers who had previously founded a base there to prey on the deep-laden galleons that sailed annually through the Bahama Channel.

In Florida, as in Mexico, the Spanish invaders first allied themselves with local Indians (the Timucua) who had earlier tried to draw the French into their wars with neighboring peoples but who now feared French domination. The more numerous Spaniards and their Timucuan allies defeated the French, whereupon the Spanish slaughtered most of the Frenchmen as heretics, sending the few survivors home to tell the tale. The Spanish governor, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, then followed the well-established pattern of establishing fortified settlements, sending out missionaries (paid from the military budget) to convert the Indians, and collecting the tribute necessary to make the enterprise self-sustaining. But Florida was not Mexico, and the path to Saint Augustine's survival led through three perilous decades of uncertainty.

In the first place, the absence of gold and silver made Saint Augustine itself a poor colony, hence—from the perspective of the royal treasury—an expensive outpost of empire. Economizing where it could, the crown refused to assign a large permanent garrison and made no concerted effort to encourage civilian settlement. Second, the dispersed Indian peoples of the region lacked the preexisting political organization that had facilitated conquest in Mexico and Peru and were unaccustomed to paying tribute. When the Spaniards tried to exact it by force, the Indians resisted, driving the

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Spanish soldiers, missionaries, and settlers back from the seven bases they had established in 1565–67 to Saint Augustine itself. The fort saved them, for the Indians, lacking artillery to batter down its walls, could hope only to starve out the defenders. Because the garrison could be resupplied by sea, the starvation siege failed, and the Spanish managed to hang on to their last precarious foothold on the Florida coast.⁶

But there is a difference between maintaining a beleaguered military outpost and planting a viable colony, and for nearly three decades the fate of Saint Augustine hung in the balance. It was only at the end of the sixteenth century, at about the time Champlain was visiting the Indies, that conversions occurred near the fort among "rival tribes [who] saw security advantages in being allied with the Spanish." Spanish officials now claimed "overlordship by arranging peace between tribes," while missionary friars who proved adept at mediating disputes in native communities forged ties with the leaders of dominant factions. Thereafter the colonization of Florida depended on establishing missions among native groups willing to receive them (thirty-six missions were operating by 1675) while maintaining a garrison and small Spanish population at and around the fort of Saint Augustine.

This was hardly conquest on the model of Mexico or Peru. When the bishop of Santiago de Cuba visited Saint Augustine more than a century after its establishment, he found just 1,500 Spanish settlers but confirmed more than 13,000 Indian converts. Since the Spanish garrison supported Christian Indians in conflicts with their unconverted neighbors and since the settlers remained few and clustered in a comparatively small region, the colony may be said to have taken root only after the local Gualé, Timucua, and Apalachee Indians succeeded in defining the conditions of occupancy and the Spaniards had acquiesced in the modus vivendi thus created. Spanish authorities in Seville or Madrid had no accurate idea of what had happened, and Saint Augustine's colonists no doubt thought, because tensions had subsided, that God had at last favored their enterprise. But the Gualés, Timucuas, and Apalachees who had integrated the Spanish into their own system of warfare, alliance, and trade knew better. If the Spanish remained in Florida and evangelized among its native peoples, it was because they did so on terms that their Indian hosts found acceptable.⁷

Champlain spent the rest of his life learning his own version of this lesson about the limits of European power in North America. Returning to France in 1601, he wrote (and lavishly illustrated) an account of his travels in the Caribbean and New Spain and set about securing himself a position on another transatlantic voyage. His interest, like that of most previous

Indians' status, as missionaries, doing a host of things for them. But as jobs done they are not like soldiers or missionaries.

The Indians and Spaniards including each other.

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French explorers, centered on the northern reaches of North America, far from Spain's dominions. For seventy years—ever since Jacques Cartier's voyages of exploration between 1534 and 1541—French cartographers had understood the Saint Lawrence River as an avenue to the heart of the continent, and European fishermen and whalers had long used the shores of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence to make seasonal camps for drying cod and rendering oil from whale carcasses. Those camps had become the scene of lively exchanges between the fishermen and native peoples. One of the items the fishermen brought home in the 1580s had particularly interested French merchants: the pelts of beaver, whose undercoat provided fur ideally suited to making felt for the big, fanciful hats that were the rage of European fashion.

Northern Europe's waning beaver populations meant that these pelts commanded premium prices, but the French wars of religion (civil wars largely driven by Spain's imperial ambitions and fueled by silver from its American mines) had so disrupted commercial life that the great merchants were unable to exploit North American fur supplies systematically. Only Breton and Basque fishermen-traders carried on a modest fur trade by calling in during the summers at Tadoussac, a small, deep harbor at the confluence of the Saguenay and Saint Lawrence rivers. There an Algonquian-speaking people whom the French called the Montagnais controlled access to the northern interior by the Saguenay and provided pelts they had gained both by hunting and by trading with groups further inland. They traded on terms uncommonly favorable to themselves. By the last years of the sixteenth century, Montagnais middlemen routinely withheld pelts each summer until enough ships arrived at Tadoussac that they could play one buyer off against the rest, acquiring the best trade goods at the lowest cost.⁸

With the conclusion of the wars of religion and Henri IV's consolidation of power in a newly unified kingdom, the king saw the utility of reestablishing French claims to North America as a means of countering Spanish power in Europe. He easily understood that the profits of a well-organized monopoly on the fur trade could be used to reward his courtiers and other supporters, who in turn could create permanent settlements in North America at no direct cost to the crown. In 1599, therefore, Henri awarded a ten-year monopoly to an old comrade in arms, Commander Aymar de Chaste, and his partners Pierre de Chauvin de Tonnetuit and François Gravé du Pont. They built a trading post at Tadoussac in 1600 only to find that, monopoly or no, Breton and Basque fisherman-traders kept coming there, too, while the Montagnais went on withholding furs to force the Europeans to compete for them. In the hope of locating an alternative to Ta-

St. Lawrence
undercoat
trade

doussac and perhaps of finding trading partners less sophisticated than⁹ the Montagnais, Gravé du Pont outfitted the little fleet of three vessels that sailed from Honfleur in March 1603 with Samuel de Champlain aboard.⁹

This voyage carried Champlain up the Saint Lawrence to the site of Quebec and beyond as high as the Lachine rapids above Montreal, the limit of navigability for seagoing vessels. He carefully noted the qualities of the land he observed ("The farther we went," he wrote, "the finer was the country"), but the place that made the strongest specific impression on him was Tadoussac, because that was where he first encountered large numbers of the people whom he and his companions called *les sauvages*.¹⁰ There, in late May and early June, he witnessed an extraordinary assembly of Indians—Montagnais and their allies, Etchemins (Malecites) and Algonquins, a thousand in all—as they celebrated a recent victory over their Mohawk enemies. With great care he described their feasting, orations, songs, display of enemy scalps, and dancing (he especially admired the Algonquins' victory dance, which began when "all the women and girls" suddenly "stripped themselves stark naked"). The ceremonies, he noted, concluded with a ritual in which each Montagnais warrior "took what seemed proper to him, such as [wampum], tomahawks, swords, kettles" and gave them to one or more warriors from among his people's allies, so that "every one had a present," which they "carried away . . . to their lodges."¹¹

Champlain and his companions returned to Tadoussac early in August and found the Montagnais, Malecites, and Algonquins again engaged in feasting and dancing as they prepared for a new expedition against the Mohawks.¹² War, Champlain concluded, was perpetual among *les sauvages*, and the alliances that enabled groups like the Montagnais to contend against their enemies were cemented and continually renewed by the kinds of rituals and gift-giving he had witnessed. These were his first insights into the culture and society of the native peoples alongside whom he spent most of his remaining years.

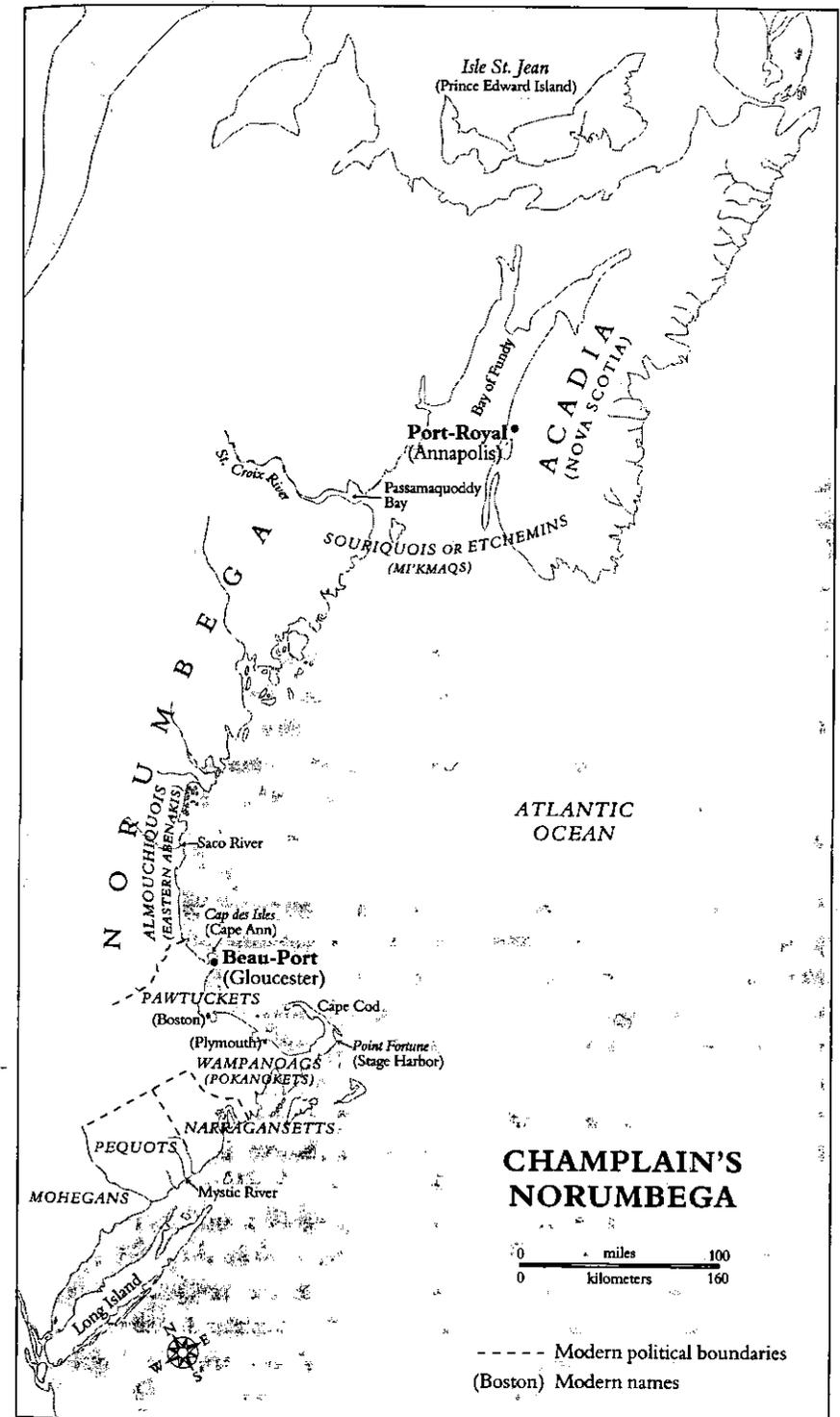
Champlain's view of the Indians and their potential reflected the ethnocentrism of his age. He found it possible to admire them for their bravery in war, their physical qualities ("they are agile, and the women are well shapen"), their personalities (they "are to a man of a very cheerful disposition"), and even their technology ("In the winter . . . they make a kind of racket twice or thrice as big as ours in France, which they fasten to their feet, and so walk on the snow without sinking"). But he dismissed their religion as mere superstition, based on a faith in prophetic dreams that were in fact "visions of the Devil." In the absence of sound morals, Indian society was

lawless, families ties were weak, and individuals were "given to revenge." In their personal dealings, he thought, they were "great liars, a people in whom it is not well to put confidence, except for good reason, and standing on your guard." And yet, for all that, he found that the Montagnais did profess belief in a Creator—a strong enough hint at monotheism that he ventured to offer a thumbnail sketch of Christian doctrine to Anadabijou, one of their chiefs. When "the said Sagamore told me that he approved what I said," Champlain concluded that with the right instruction "they would speedily be brought to be good Christians, if we were to inhabit their lands, which most of them desire."¹³

This mixture of observation, analysis, and wishful thinking suggests that Champlain was beginning to envision a future Canada colonized by French people of good character, trading with *les sauvages*, spreading the gospel among them, bringing them peace, and saving their souls. The colony of New France would enrich his sovereign (and, *s'il plait à Dieu*, his servant Champlain), adding to his power as New Spain enhanced the power of the Spanish king; but it would do so with none of the debilitating effects that Spanish repression had on the Indians of Mexico. Champlain did not yet imagine that Anadabijou's approval of Christian principles might have been an attempt to make polite conversation with a talkative guest or that the Indians might expect something more than catechetical instruction in return for allowing the French "to inhabit their lands."

Champlain's old skills as a maker of harbor charts, his emerging talents as a practical ethnographer, scribe, and publicist, and his ability to lead exploring parties procured him a role in the next stage of exploration, which began in the spring of 1604. Champlain suggested to Pierre de Gua, sieur de Monts (a Protestant merchant from Saintonge the king appointed to lead the fur monopoly following the death of Aymar de Chaste), that the best site for a permanent trading post might lie somewhere on the Atlantic coast, away from Tadoussac's highly developed commerce. With this in mind, de Monts organized an expedition to explore Acadia (modern Nova Scotia) and the coast of Norumbega (New Brunswick and New England). Champlain went along as geographer, returning to France only in the autumn of 1607.

Three summers of exploration, mapping, and trading gave Champlain unparalleled knowledge of the coastline from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Cod and greatly expanded his experience in dealing with Indians. Above all, these years taught him the importance of maintaining friendly relations with the Indians who permitted the French to set up *habitations* on their lands. Generosity in trade and loyalty to one's native hosts, he found, were



the twin keys to success. Yet his experience also suggested that the very qualities essential to forging commercial alliances were apt to make those Indians who had previously been enemies of his allies into enemies of his own. A story that threads its way through Champlain's account of his sojourn in Acadia and Norumbega illustrates this point.¹⁴

In 1605, after spending a miserable winter on an island in the Saint Croix River near Passamaquoddy Bay, de Monts's men crossed the Bay of Fundy and built a new *habitation*, Port-Royal, on the Acadian peninsula. There they established friendly relations with Membertou, the chief of the local Souriquois (Mi'kmaq) band while taking pains to retain the goodwill of Messamouet, the sachem of the Mi'kmaqs who had lived near the abandoned Saint Croix settlement.¹⁵ Both sachems understood the advantages to be had by trading with the French, and Messamouet in particular saw the potential for using this new connection as a means of expanding his influence. Thus in September 1606, Messamouet accompanied Champlain on a voyage down the coast to the Saco River with the intention of making peace with the Almouchiquois (Eastern Abenaki) sachem, Onemechin.¹⁶ The Mi'kmaqs and the Eastern Abenakis had long been enemies, and Onemechin accurately interpreted Messamouet's lavish diplomatic gift—"kettles, axes, knives, and other articles" he had previously obtained from the French—as an effort to turn him into a client. He therefore reciprocated with a paltry present of "Indian corn, squashes, and Brazilian beans." Messamouet, Champlain wrote,

departed much displeased because he had not been suitably repaid for what he had given them, and with the intention of making war upon them before long; for these people give only with the idea of receiving something, except to persons who have done them some signal service, such as aiding them in their wars.¹⁷

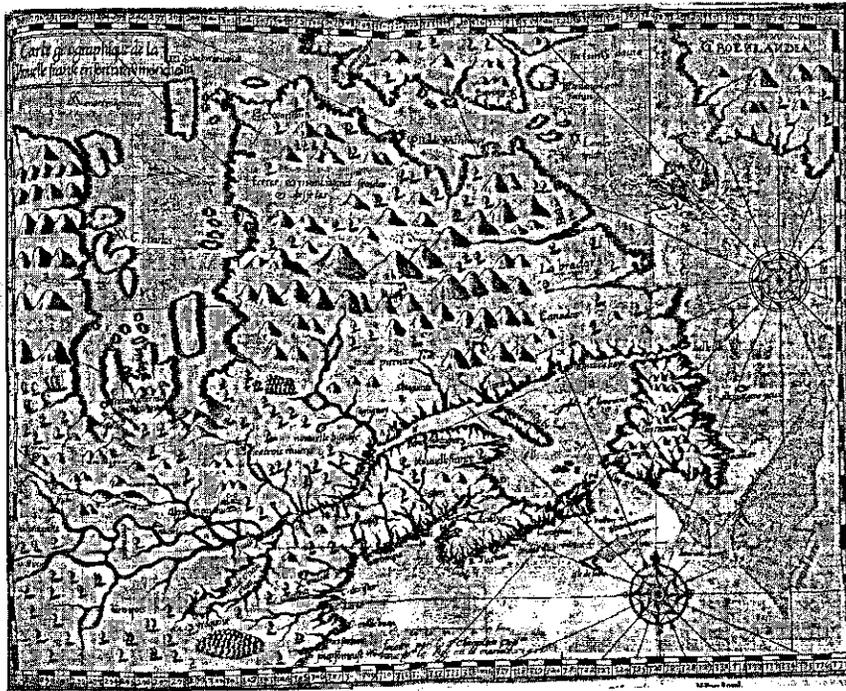
Champlain and his men continued down the coast to the Island Cape (Cape Ann), where to their surprise Onemechin soon appeared. He behaved strangely when they tried to give him a coat as a gift. He "presented it to another" (Champlain thought it was because he found it "uncomfortable . . . [and] could not adapt himself to it"¹⁸) and then drew Quiouhamenec, the local chief, aside for a private conference. Soon Quiouhamenec's band—Algonquian-speaking Pawtuckets—began to act in threatening ways. This disconcerted Champlain, who had found them perfectly agreeable during the previous year's visit.¹⁹

The voyage thereafter became increasingly unpleasant. Calling in⁹ at a handsome harbor they named Beau-port (Gloucester) on September 30, the French found themselves forced to draw their weapons and make a hasty exit when the Pawtuckets seemed to be preparing an attack. Two weeks later, at Port Fortuné (Stage Harbor), they were less lucky. The local Wampanoag warriors launched a surprise assault on a group of Frenchmen baking bread, killing four and severely wounding a fifth.²⁰ When Champlain tried to retaliate, he suffered several more casualties without killing any warriors or taking a single prisoner. He returned to Port-Royal with "four or five" men whose wounds festered with such a "stench" that the rest of the crew "could scarcely bear it."²¹

This abrupt reversal of fortune in dealing with the Indians left Champlain frustrated and puzzled. Had they thought it to their advantage, Messamouet and Membertou might have explained to him that all this mischief could be attributed to Onemechin, sachem of the Saco Abenakis, and his evident intention to persist in hostility toward the Mi'kmaqs—and thus to their ally, Champlain. Soon it came to war. During the winter of 1606–07, a warrior from Onemechin's band killed Panonias, a Malecite ally of the Mi'kmaqs who had acted as an interpreter on Champlain's exploring voyage of 1605. On June 20, 1607, Membertou led about 400 Mi'kmaq and Malecite warriors in a flotilla of canoes from Acadia to Abenaki country on the Saco. Champlain did not accompany them on the raid but noted that they returned on August 10 after killing twenty Abenakis, including Onemechin and another chief.²²

Membertou's raid confirmed Champlain's belief that an extravagant desire for revenge motivated *les sauvages* in their dealings with one another. "This whole war," he wrote, "was solely on account of Panonias, one of our Indian friends, who . . . had been killed at Norumbega by the said Onemechin's . . . people." He did not yet understand the degree to which what had happened depended on French, not Indian, designs. The Mi'kmaqs' attack was unusually effective because two years of trade with the French had brought quantities of edged weapons—hatchets, knives, swords, arrowheads—into their possession. Wittingly or no, by their presence in Acadia as traders, the French had tipped the balance of power along the coast of Norumbega in favor of the Mi'kmaqs, to whom they had become not just neighbors and friends but also arms-suppliers and, perforce, allies.

Champlain understood little of this when he sailed for France in the fall of 1607. Uppermost in his mind was what he would advise the sieur de Monts (who had previously returned to France) concerning the future



"Carte Geographique de la Nouvelle France," published with Champlain's account, *Voyages Made to the Great River Saint Lawrence*, in 1613, was in part based on his 1607 map of Acadia and Norumbega.

activities of the company, that and the completion of a magnificent map of Acadia and Norumbega, based on his own detailed observations. But though Indians and their world no longer preoccupied Champlain as he returned to France, his next venture in America put them squarely before him, with effects even more dramatic, unforeseeable, and far-reaching than his experience thus far could have led him to expect.

By now he knew that Acadia and Norumbega were rich in fish and timber and might even yield copper; but insofar as the company's future profits lay in furs, its success would depend on locating a trading post further inland on the Saint Lawrence. There, closer to the source of prime beaver pelts, Champlain could make direct contact with interior peoples and outflank the small-time independent traders who infested Tadoussac.²³ De Monts agreed, named Champlain his lieutenant, and outfitted another fleet of three ships to return in 1608. One would make further explorations in Acadia; another would trade at Tadoussac; the third, *Le Don de Dieu*, would

carry Champlain and the supplies he needed to establish a year-round trading post at a spot the Indians called Quebec, the Narrows. He had identified it on his voyage of 1603 as a good anchorage, with a defensible location for a fort on the north shore, where the "soil[, if it] were tilled . . . would be as good as ours" in France.²⁴ On July 3, he and his crew began to build the *habitation* there that in time became the capital of New France.

Champlain came to Quebec to stay, and—once he had beaten down a small mutiny among his workmen, gotten a crop of winter wheat and rye into the ground before frost, and survived the first terrible winter—he had every reason to believe he could. Two French boys, who had spent the winter with the local Montagnais band in order to learn their language, had become fluent enough to act as interpreters. The Montagnais themselves had embraced their new neighbors because Champlain's fortified trading post offered them shelter when their enemies attacked and held stocks of food to help them through times of scarcity.²⁵ Eager now to begin making a profit for his employers, Champlain engaged Montagnais guides to conduct him up the Saint Lawrence in June 1609. He hoped to contact the Algonquins who lived upriver, some of whom had visited Quebec the previous year; most of all, he wanted to establish relations with the Hurons who lived even further west, beside a great freshwater sea.

Before Champlain had traveled a dozen leagues up the Saint Lawrence, he met perhaps three hundred Hurons and Algonquins who were coming to Quebec to make his acquaintance.²⁶ Following an exchange of speeches and presents, the leader of the Algonquins, Iroquet, and the Huron chief, Ochasteguin, offered Champlain a proposition that he could not refuse. "Some ten moons ago," they reminded him, not long after his arrival at Quebec,

Iroquet's son had come to see me, when I had given him a kind reception, and had told him that . . . I wished to help them against their enemies. With these they had long been at war, on account of many cruelties practised against their tribe under colour of friendship. They said that, having ever since desired friendship, they had asked all the Indians I saw on the river's bank to come to meet us for the purpose of making an alliance with us. Since these had never seen Christians, this fact also moved them to come and see us; that I might do with them and their companions whatever I liked; that they had no children with them, but only men skilled in war and full of courage, who knew the country and the rivers in the land of the

Iroquois. And that they now besought me to return to our settlement, for them to see our houses, and that three days later we should all set off on the war-path together.²⁷

Champlain assured them that he personally would join them on the expedition “for their greater satisfaction, and that they could see that I had no other intention than to make war,” for he feared that “evil reports [had been] made to them”—probably by the crafty Montagnais—suggesting that the French could not be trusted to keep their promises. Then, he wrote, “I said no more, awaiting an opportunity of showing them by results more than [words what] they could expect of me.”²⁸

They returned to Quebec for several days of feasting, gift-giving, and oratory before departing on June 28 for the River of the Iroquois (now the Richelieu). This offered the quickest route to the Mohawk country and also the one likeliest to yield contact with enemy warriors prepared to do battle. At the river’s mouth, however, the majority of the Indians rethought their priorities. “The result of which,” Champlain wrote, “was that only a part of them decided to come with me, whilst the rest went back to their own country with . . . the goods they had bartered.”²⁹ Champlain and two other Frenchmen armed with matchlock muskets therefore joined just sixty or so warriors—Montagnais, Huron, and Algonquin—to paddle upstream in twenty-four canoes toward “a very large lake, filled with beautiful islands,” that no Christian had yet seen.³⁰

Champlain observed the Indians’ behavior ever more closely as they neared the “large, beautiful region near the lake, where . . . their enemies lived,”³¹ setting down the first detailed European description of a native military campaign in the northeastern woodlands. He admired much of what they did. They traveled during the day, he noted, in three divisions: “a troop of scouts” ahead, to look for signs of the enemy; the main body, “always under arms,” in the middle; and behind them a third “troop for hunting, scattered in various directions” but always taking care not to betray the expedition’s presence.³² At night, the Indians made camp by constructing bark huts or wigwams near the shore and felling trees to make a barricade on the land side, all “so quickly that after less than two hours’ work, five hundred of their enemies would have had difficulty in driving them out.” After sending scouts to make sure that no enemy war parties were within “two or three leagues,” they cooked a meal and retired for the night without posting guards. This lackadaisical practice, so unlike the care with which they organized their movement by water, struck Champlain as folly. He

tried to persuade them to “have men posted to listen and see whether they might perceive anything, and not live as they were doing like silly creatures.” The Indians laughed him off. Having worked hard all day long, they said, they needed their sleep.³³

Champlain’s companions were casual about security because they knew, more or less, where to find their foes and what to expect from them when they met. All casualness vanished when they judged that they were within three days’ travel of the Mohawk settlements. At that point, he noted, “they proceed stealthily at night, all in a body, except the scouts. In the day time they retire into the thick of the woods, where they rest without any straggling, or making a noise, or making a fire even for the purpose of cooking.” They also ceased to hunt, eating only “baked Indian meal . . . which becomes like porridge” when “steeped in water.”³⁴ During the daytime encampments the leaders also prepared their warriors for battle. “The chiefs take sticks a foot long,” Champlain wrote,

one for each man, indicating by other ones, a little larger, their chiefs. Then they go into the woods and clear off a place of five or six feet square, where the chief, as sergeant-major, arranges all these sticks into an order as he sees fit. Then he calls his companions, and they come all armed, and he demonstrates to them the rank and order that they will observe when they are fighting with their enemies. All this the savages regard attentively, remarking the figure that their chief has made with the sticks. Afterward they retire from there, and put themselves in order, according to what they have seen of the said sticks. Then they mix one amongst another, and again returning to their order two or three times, they go back to their huts without need of a sergeant to maintain their ranks. . . . Such is the rule they maintain in their warfare.³⁵

At each encampment the Indians also consulted “their *Pilotois* or *Ostemoy*, who are the people who play the part of wizards,” asking them what portents of the future they had seen in their visions or dreams.³⁶ These “superstitious ceremonies,” Champlain believed, were as foolish as their refusal to post guards, for they could only detract from the vigilance, “courage, and good hope” with which soldiers should approach battle. For this reason he was irritated when the Indians pestered him to tell “whether I had had dreams and had seen their enemies”—and more than a little disconcerted when, during his midday sleep on July 29, he dreamed vividly of

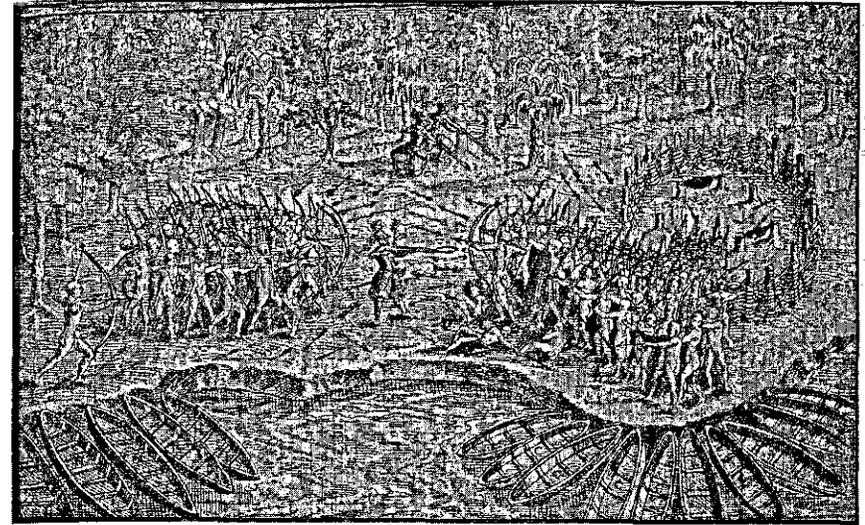
"our enemies, the Iroquois, drowning before our eyes." His companions, however, rejoiced. "This [dream] gave them such confidence that they no longer had any doubt as to the good fortune awaiting them."³⁷

They met the enemy that night near the promontory of Ticonderoga, at the head of the lake. It was a Mohawk war party of about 200; like the invaders, they had been traveling under cover of darkness. Neither side expected to meet the other on the water, and for a time all was shouting and confusion. Then, according to Champlain, "We drew out into the lake and the Iroquois landed and arranged all their canoes near one another. Then they began to fell trees . . . and they barricaded themselves well." The Montagnais and their allies lay offshore "within bowshot" of the Mohawks, sending warriors in two canoes to parley, and arrange a battle for the following morning. For the remainder of the night, the two groups hurled insults across the water in a way unsurprising to Champlain, who recognized it as behavior "such as is usual at the siege of a city" in Europe. Before dawn they debarked into a meadow a few hundred yards from the Mohawk fort and made ready for battle.³⁸

Champlain and his countrymen donned helmets and light armor, loaded their muskets, lit the slow-burning match cord that would ignite the charges when they pulled the triggers, and waited as the Indians drew themselves up in battle order. Champlain watched the Iroquois warriors—"in appearance strong, robust men"—issue from the barricade clad in wooden armor, armed with bows and flint-tipped arrows. They "came slowly to meet us with a gravity and calm which I admired," he noted. "Our Indians likewise advanced in similar order, and told me that those who had the three big plumes were the chiefs . . . ; and I was to do what I could to kill them." As they advanced, Champlain's fellow musketeers, along with several Indians, slipped off into the trees at the verge of the meadow and took up firing positions.³⁹

Champlain hung back, trailing the advancing warriors until they halted within bowshot of the Mohawks. Then

Our Indians began to call me with great cries: and gave me passage by opening in two parts. And I put myself at their head, marching some twenty paces ahead, until I was within some thirty paces of the enemy, where immediately they saw me. I halted. . . . Just as I saw them making ready to draw their bows on us, I laid my cheek to the arquebus [musket] and aimed straight at one of the three chiefs, and with the shot two of them fell to the ground. One of their companions was also wounded, who died some time later. I had put four



This engraving, "The Defeat of the Iroquois at Lake Champlain," followed a sketch (now lost) that Champlain provided, but added elements, notably the depiction of the Indian warriors as naked, which followed the artistic conventions of the day. In fact warriors on both sides wore wooden plate armor or at least carried shields like those depicted in the next illustration.

balls in my arquebus. Then our people, seeing this shot so favorable for them, commenced to utter such great cries that one could not have heard it thunder, while the arrows flew thick on both sides. The Iroquois were astonished that two men should have been killed so quickly, even though they were armored with wooden plates bound together with cotton cord, which were proof against their arrows. This gave them great apprehension. As I was reloading, one of my companions fired a shot from the woods, which astonished them once again so much that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage and took to flight, abandoning the field and their fort, fleeing into the depths of the wood, where we pursued them, and where I killed still more. Our Indians also killed several and took ten or twelve prisoners. The rest fled with the wounded. Among our Indians fifteen or sixteen were wounded by arrows, but these soon recovered.⁴⁰

To Champlain's chagrin, his allies showed no inclination to annihilate their fleeing foes. He could not understand such a lack of initiative; letting slip a matchless opportunity to kill or capture the entire enemy party, they stopped to collect the armor and shields and weapons the Mohawks had



Early-seventeenth-century Huron dress. These engravings show native costumes similar to those worn by the Algonquins, Montagnais, and Iroquois that Champlain encountered. A and C show warriors equipped for raids; E depicts a warrior in armor made of wooden panels bound together with cotton cord.

dropped as they fled, feasting on the provisions they found within the barricade and dancing to celebrate their victory. Three hours later, with the surviving Mohawks miles away and safe, Champlain's allies returned to their canoes and paddled northward, toward home.

That evening they stopped, thirty miles down the lake, for one more ceremony. Choosing a prisoner, the Montagnais kindled a fire and bade him sing his death song. Then they stripped and tortured him, applying brands to his back, fingertips, and genitals, ripping out his fingernails, scalping him and pouring hot pitch into the wound, and slicing open his arms to get at the sinews, which they twisted around sticks and ripped out. Champlain, aghast at the sight, nonetheless found the man's fortitude astonishing: "he bore it so firmly that sometimes one would have said he felt scarcely any pain." When offered a burning stick to apply to the victim, he refused: Christians, he told them, "do not commit such cruelties"; when they killed, Christians "killed people outright." Eventually, despite their protests, he seized his musket and "with one shot caused [the victim] to escape all the

tortures he would have suffered." The Indians then dismembered and disemboweled the corpse, scattering its parts, though "they kept the scalp, which they had flayed, as they did with of all the others whom they had killed in their attack." When they continued the next morning, the Frenchman understood that the rest of the prisoners would meet the same fate when their captors brought them home.⁴¹

If Champlain had no qualms about participating in a battle, the captive's death clearly disturbed him; the more so, perhaps, because he understood that he would have to witness the torture of many prisoners if he hoped to maintain friendly relations with his allies. He had gone too far down that path now to turn back. The Hurons and Algonquins "were all much pleased at what had taken place in the war, and because I had gone with them willingly. So we all separated with great protestations of mutual friendship, and they asked me if I would not go to their country, and aid them continually like a brother. I promised them I would."⁴² He also accepted the gift of a scalp and "a pair of shields belonging to their enemies . . . to show to the king. And to please them I promised to do so."⁴³ Finally, when he returned to Quebec, several Algonquins who had left the expedition at the mouth of the Richelieu paid him a visit to express their regret at not having taken part in the fighting. To make amends they presented him "some furs in consideration of the fact that I had been there and had helped their friends."⁴⁴

Champlain sailed for France in September to make his report to the king and the sieur de Monts. Not by nature a reflective man, he nonetheless understood that he had crossed a significant threshold: military alliance, he knew, was the key that would open amicable trade relations with the Indians of the interior. In his report to de Monts, Champlain described the favorable "prospects for the future in view of the promises of the natives called Ochatequins," or Hurons. These "good Iroquois" had agreed to allow him "to complete the exploration of the great river Saint Lawrence, on condition we carried out the promise to assist them in their wars" against "the other Iroquois [of the Five Nations], who are their enemies . . . farther south."⁴⁵ He had risked his own life, and deprived several Mohawks of theirs, for the sake of securing a steady supply of beaver pelts. That was a long step beyond the diplomatic and commercial alliance he had forged with Membertou and Messamouet, who had not insisted that he actually join them in attacking their enemies. But the potential rewards of an alliance sealed with blood, he now knew, were vastly greater.

In a variation on the theme Cortés had sounded in Mexico a century before, Champlain had moved from observing Indians to trading with them

and from trading to participating in their wars as an ally. He went to war again with more decisive results in the coming year, when he returned to Canada in time to join another war party of Montagnais and Algonquins. Upon his arrival at Quebec, a group of Montagnais warriors "importuned me with questions as to whether I should fail in what I had promised them. I reassured them and made them fresh promises, asking them whether they had found me false in the past. They rejoiced greatly," he observed, "when I repeated my promises to them." Yet still they pressed him:

"There are many Basques and Mistigoches (for so they call the Normans and the people of Saint Malo) who say that they will accompany us on the war-path. . . . Do they speak the truth?" I said that they did not, and that . . . what they said was merely in order to obtain possession of the Indians' goods.⁴⁶

The success of the previous year had raised the stakes. Even if Champlain had seen this as a reason for caution, however, he could not decline to take part in a new expedition, for his prospects of profit now depended on meeting the Indians' expectations.

Champlain accordingly arranged a trade fair and took part in preparatory ceremonies at Trois Rivières, on the Saint Lawrence downriver from its confluence with the Richelieu, just before the expedition. Expectations high, he sailed from Quebec with "four pinnaces [schooners] loaded with merchandise for bartering furs with among others the Ochateguins [Hurons], who were to . . . bring along as many as 400 men to go on the war-path."⁴⁷ This time, however, the path proved unexpectedly short.

On June 19, 1610, Champlain was at the rendezvous point, an island at the mouth of the Richelieu where he expected to meet another 200 Algonquin warriors, when messengers from a scouting party brought word that a force of about a hundred Mohawks had been discovered nearby. Champlain and ten musketeers joined the warriors, who now rushed to attack the Mohawks, whom they found trapped within a defensive barricade. In a bloody assault the allies killed virtually everyone in the fort, many by point-blank musket fire: the French "hardly missed a shot, and fired two or three bullets each time, and for the most part had [their] arquebuses resting on the . . . barricade" as they aimed into the crowded enclosure. In the end, only fifteen Mohawks survived to be taken captive. All save a single warrior, whom the Montagnais gave to Champlain and who later escaped, died under torture.⁴⁸

Thus intercultural exchanges that began with mutual observation⁴ and trade in 1603 progressed to military alliance and victory in 1609 and culminated, the following year, in a massacre. And yet for all the slaughter it produced, Champlain's alliance-building did not yield the profits he had anticipated. The wound he sustained in the battle—an arrow split his ear and lodged in his neck—was scarcely dressed before he realized that "other pinnaces" had followed his expedition upriver. These vessels belonged to interlopers—the Mistigoches (Normans and Malouines) whom he had earlier denounced—who had already begun to trade with Champlain's allies. When the expected party of Algonquins arrived, too late to participate in the fighting, the Mistigoches "carried off the better part" of their pelts, he wrote. "It was doing [the interlopers] a great favour to search out for them strange tribes, in order that they might later on carry off the whole profit without running any risk or hazard."⁴⁹

Champlain's venture thus came to a bitter end in 1610, and worse followed. Not long after he returned to Quebec he learned of the assassination of King Henri IV and the accession to the throne of the nine year-old Louis XIII, developments that called into question not just the welfare of the kingdom but the future of the sieur de Monts and his associates in the fur trade. Despite all their work, the trade had not yet begun to pay off; hence Champlain's continuing quest to establish contact with interior peoples who lived close to the supply of furs and beyond the reach of competitors. As long as Henri lived, the associates could hope at least to retain their monopoly by virtue of de Monts's position at court. Henri's murder changed everything for Champlain and de Monts; they were compelled to spend years talking up Canada and trying to enlist as business partners those courtiers who controlled access to the young king—a process as frustrating as the effort to create an exclusive trading partnership with Indians near the source of the best pelts. Champlain returned to Canada to govern Quebec and trade for furs as best he could until 1615, when he opened a new phase in Canada's history by introducing missionaries and forged an alliance directly with the Hurons by taking part in yet another expedition against the Iroquois.

War and Trade in the Age of Contact

Champlain was only one of many western Europeans who ventured across the Atlantic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period of extended interaction among peoples who had previously known little or nothing of

each other. From the Bight of Benin to the harbor of Havana, from Hudson's Bay to the Bay of Biscay, millions were affected, directly or indirectly, in the exchange of goods, animals, plants, people, and pathogens. The peoples of the Atlantic rim shared the same fundamental human needs for food, sex, security, and transcendence, but they participated in cultures that expressed those needs, and societies and economies that organized the pursuit of them, in strikingly different ways. Systems of war and trade, for example, were as old as human societies in Europe, the Americas, and Africa but were conducted according to different rules and served different ends on the continents where they had arisen.

Champlain's experiences illustrate the consequences of the convergence of these systems during the Age of Contact. Although he understood participation as an ally in wars among Native Americans as a means to the end of gaining advantage in the fur trade, Champlain's actions in 1609 and 1610 must be seen as part of a long-running interaction between European and North American patterns of trade and war. In the sixteenth century, that prolonged encounter catalyzed a Military Revolution that transformed the European state system. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it reshaped the world.

Champlain's formative experiences as a soldier in France's Eighth War of Religion were, in a very real sense, the product of Spain's ability to extract riches from the mines of Mexico and Peru. The European warfare system was already in flux from the introduction of gunpowder weapons and the Reformation's loosening of restraints on wars within Christendom when torrents of American bullion flooded into Spain's treasury in the aftermath of Cortés's and Pizarro's conquests. This extraordinary influx of wealth produced a period of extraordinarily destructive and expensive warfare, driven largely by Spain's ambition to dominate Europe and determination to defend the Catholic faith. As Holy Roman Emperor from 1519 to 1556, Charles V (King Charles I of Spain) used the treasure of the Indies to build the greatest army in Europe. Under Charles and his son Philip II, Spain fought France five times; supported a seven-decade-long war in the Netherlands in an attempt to keep Dutch Protestants from asserting their independence from Rome and Madrid; sent an Armada against England; conducted land campaigns against Muslim states in North Africa; and fought the Mediterranean naval war against the Ottomans that climaxed at the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Meanwhile wars eddied everywhere on the edges of the Spanish vortex, fueled by the silver that circulated throughout western Europe as a consequence of Spain's vast military expenditures.⁵⁰

Yet the American silver that sustained the worst warfare and the worst inflation that Europe had ever seen did not enable that continent's princes to win decisive victories. With two minor exceptions—the war of the Schmalkaldic League (1546–47) and the war of Ostia (1557)—every European conflict of the sixteenth century proved to be prolonged, prodigiously expensive, and indecisive. These great wars introduced new weaponry (the arquebus, the pistol, the long pike, improved and more mobile artillery), new tactics and formations (the Spanish Square and the cavalry caracole, the regiment and the division), new styles of fortification (the artillery-resistant *trace italienne*), and vastly enlarged standing armies. Such innovations, however, balanced the advantages of offense and defense so closely that every war became a war of attrition: belligerents fought until they exhausted their resources, then negotiated treaties of peace in order to recover financially and rebuild their armed forces. Intensive developments in recruiting, logistics, and administration strained the financial capacities of governments to the limit, inducing monarchs to claim ever larger powers while inflicting ever more widespread misery and death.⁵¹

The sixteenth century's indecisive land warfare promoted another trend, too, of vast consequence for the future of the world: a great expansion of Europe's navies. Spain's celebrated attack on England with the Armada of 1588 represented the first attempt to break through to victory in the Netherlands revolt—a deadlocked land war—by sending a fleet to sweep the English from the Channel and disable them from further aiding the Protestant Dutch.⁵² The Armada, of course, did not succeed, and the Anglo-Spanish War of 1588–1604 ended as indecisively as most other sixteenth-century conflicts. The destruction of his Armada, however, so concentrated the gloomy mind of Spain's King Philip II that its "defeat . . . was not so much the end as the beginning of the Spanish navy."⁵³ England, France, and the Dutch responded with a naval arms race that lasted a century, produced major improvements in ship and armaments design, and gave their fleets the capacity to operate over oceanic distances. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, European navies could project force around the world and thus sustain imperial competition on a global scale.

By the time Champlain leveled his musket at the Mohawk warriors, then, Europe's rulers were groping their way toward a realization that seems axiomatic today: that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."⁵⁴ Wars were only the most violent phases of a perpetual competition for dominance among rulers who knew that money was the sinews of war and who believed that the supply of wealth in the world equaled the

amount of treasure—gold and silver—in existence. Because commercial competition among states amounted, in effect, to the zero-sum game of gaining this wealth, early modern statesmen instinctively understood trade as the continuation of war by other means.⁵⁵

But warfare and trade as practiced in North America at the beginning of the Age of Contact had little to do with the practices and assumptions that were becoming normative in Europe.⁵⁶ Most aboriginal groups north of Mexico, east of the Rockies, and south of central Canada—the region of maize cultivation—regarded war and trade (not, as the Europeans thought, war and peace) as opposite conditions in relations between groups. War and trade, in fact, were so different that they tended to come under the control of different sets of leaders.⁵⁷ The affairs of ordinary life and diplomacy were typically arranged by “civil chiefs”—older men whose talents in conciliation, negotiation, and oratory tended to sustain understanding and cooperation between groups. The destructive, emotional, and supremely antisocial activities of warfare, on the other hand, were the province of young, impulsive, vigorous men, led by “war chiefs.” Unlike European countries, in which monarchs and parliaments claimed an indivisible supreme power and decided whether their nations would wage war or pursue peace, in North America among native peoples, the idea of a single sovereign universally responsible for policy was unknown.

Anthropologists identify the prevalent form of aboriginal conflict east of the Rockies as “mourning war.” Mourning wars resembled feuds (which is what Champlain took them for) insofar as one group compensated for deaths it had suffered by exacting corresponding lives from the enemy group held responsible for the killing. But mourning wars differed crucially from feuds in that they also controlled population losses by producing captives who could be adopted to replace the dead.⁵⁸ Mourning wars might go on indefinitely at varying levels of activity and indeed were virtually perpetual among inveterate enemies. The principal goal, however, was not so much the destruction of an enemy’s population as the support of one’s own.

North American military encounters in the Age of Contact tended to occur in one of two ritualized forms, raids or pitched battles. Raids aimed at securing women and children as captives for adoption, or at capturing enemy warriors for ritual torture and execution, which served as a means of acquiring their spiritual power. Pitched battles were much larger affairs that occurred less frequently because they required the participation of men from several villages or of allies from other nations. What Champlain witnessed at Ticonderoga on July 30, 1609, was intended to be just this sort of

battle, in which ranks of armored men first showered insults, then arrows, on each other. Had he and his two compatriots not intervened by firing their muskets into the Mohawk ranks and turning the fight into a rout, combat would doubtless have continued with further exchanges of arrows. Since the sharp but brittle flint arrowheads could not easily penetrate wooden armor, few men would likely have died in the battle. Massed confrontations might also evolve into single combat between champions representing each side, in a kind of lethal sporting event. Whatever form pitched battles took, however, the wholesale destruction of enemies was never the goal. The point of a battle was to demonstrate martial skills and to capture what enemies could be taken or, failing that, to acquire the trophies, such as scalps or heads, by which a warrior could appropriate the spiritual power of his adversary.⁵⁹

Peace was typically established by diplomatic rituals that instituted trading relations between groups; indeed, trade was so much a part of the definition of peace that “the absence of trading relationships could easily lead to a presumption of hostility.”⁶⁰ Trade differed from war in every way. Trade emphasized sociability: based on ideals of reciprocity and traditionally conceived of as mutual gift-giving, exchanges built connections both within and between groups. Trade was therefore fundamentally anticompetitive, since its ultimate goal was not to gain wealth but to create mutual obligations and alliances of advantage to all. The most significant items—for example, tobacco, shell beads, and crystals—were sacred in character and could not be traded without endowing the exchanges themselves with spiritual power.⁶¹ Men controlled long-distance trade between groups, but women as well as men participated in local exchanges of goods and food. Because of the need to maintain balance, recall past connections, and sustain mutual trust between groups, trade relations could never be entrusted to impulsive leaders. Only men who had survived their warrior youth and lived long enough to achieve self-control, learn the difficult arts of conciliation, and acquire the wisdom of age could act as civil chiefs.⁶²

The reciprocity and cooperativeness of trade relations did not necessarily imply equality between the partners. Indeed, the privileged access of one trading partner to a desirable commodity implied a fundamental inequality in most alliances. Even before the beginnings of European contact, it seems clear that Indian groups able to obtain such spiritually powerful items as wampum used them strategically to enhance their own position vis-à-vis other groups. Of such imbalances of power as well as the mutual need for security were alliances made. With a massive increase in the availability of

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European manufactures at trading posts like Quebec, trade goods became crucial to the construction and maintenance of alliances. This was especially the case when the available items—initially, anything made of iron, steel, or brass, later guns and ammunition—could be used to increase the military capacity of one's group.

The onset of colonization radically destabilized Indian practices of war and trade. Intimations of these changes can be seen in Champlain's encounters with natives along the New England coast in 1606. When the Mi'kmaq (Souriquois) sachem Messamouet tried to establish trading relations with the Eastern Abenaki (Almouchiquois) chief, Onemechin, his extravagant gift of metallic goods announced his connection to a new, powerful ally. This left Onemechin to choose between two clear alternatives. On one hand, he could opt for peaceful relations with the Mi'kmaq and an open channel to French trade goods through Messamouet. This would increase his power in dealing with other bands in his area but subordinate him to Messamouet, who could ultimately control his access to the Europeans' goods. On the other hand, he could reject Messamouet's proposed alliance. If he did that, the best he could do in the short run would be to try to eliminate the French ally whose presence had destabilized the accustomed balance of power. That was, in fact, the course he chose. In doing so, he effectively made active warfare inevitable between his band and the Mi'kmaqs.

But war, when it came, was of a different sort than Onemechin had known. Ordinarily, the killing of a single man—in this case, the Malecite (Etchemin) go-between Panonias, an ally of the Mi'kmaqs—would have occasioned retribution, but it would have been a retaliation roughly proportional to the injury suffered. When Messamouet and Membertou's bands struck back in the summer of 1607, however, they did so with what must have seemed exceptional fury. While Champlain was not a witness and therefore did not describe precisely what took place, the likeliest scenario is that when the Mi'kmaqs and Abenakis organized themselves for a pitched battle, the metallic weapons that the Mi'kmaq warriors had acquired from the French gave them a destructive power far greater than that of their foes.

To take twenty lives, including those of two chiefs, was much more than a simple retaliation for Panonias's death. It was an unmistakable attempt to use superior force to subordinate the Abenakis, a goal that Messamouet's earlier diplomatic approach had failed to achieve. Under normal conditions, no group would risk striking such a blow because it would invite retaliation in kind; only a people emboldened by access to superior weapons would have tried it. That peace between the Mi'kmaqs and the Abenakis was even-

tually negotiated by a French mediator—Champlain's ship carpenter Champdoré, who remained in Acadia—suggests that the Saco Abenakis were at last compelled to make peace (and thus to enter into trade with the Mi'kmaqs) on an unequal footing, just as Messamouet had intended.⁶³

The results were even more dramatic and far-reaching in 1609 and 1610, when Champlain agreed to join his Montagnais, Algonquin, and Huron partners in expeditions against their Iroquois enemies. He understood, of course, almost nothing of the source of enmity between the groups; it seems to have grown up as a result of the disappearance, fifty to sixty years earlier, of the Iroquoian peoples who had inhabited the Saint Lawrence Valley from Quebec to Lake Ontario. Five Nations Iroquois warriors ranging northward from their homeland to hunt in the vacated region had collided with Montagnais, Algonquins, and Hurons who were entering the area from the east and west.⁶⁴ The seasonal trade with the French at Tadoussac had given the Montagnais and their allies some degree of advantage over the Five Nations in this shadowy half-century of struggle. Champlain's establishment of a trading post and *habitation* at Quebec, however, and his willingness to use terrifying gunpowder weapons on behalf of his Montagnais, Algonquin, and Huron friends, fell on the Five Nations like a thunderbolt.

The defeat of the Mohawks at Ticonderoga in 1609 and even more the annihilation of the Mohawk war party in the valley of the Richelieu in the following year effectively threw the Five Nations back from their northern hunting grounds and cut them off from access to French trade goods, unless, of course, they were prepared to subordinate themselves to the Montagnais. A whole generation passed before the Iroquois began to regain the ground they had lost to the Montagnais, Hurons, and Algonquins as a consequence of their alliance with Champlain. In the meantime, the old practice of great war parties and pitched battles vanished, a casualty of the French muskets and steel arrowheads that rendered wooden armor useless and massed formations suicidal. Raids—less governable, because they represented war at the level of the village rather than any larger unit—now became the main mode of military operations.

How the Mohawks recovered, and the revival of the Five Nations fortunes generally, was a story that also began, by sheer coincidence, in 1609. On September 13, as Champlain was sailing for France to report to the sieur de Monts, Henry Hudson was guiding his stout little sixty-ton ship, the *Half Moon*, past the isle of Manhattan, heading north up a broad estuary that he hoped would lead him to the Pacific. Hudson, an English navigator, had been hired by the Amsterdam chamber of the Dutch East India Company

to sail to Asia by way of the Barents Sea. When icebergs and fog blocked his way, he prudently avoided a mutiny by heading west and south to seek a warmer passage. What he found on the North American coast at 41° north latitude was not a route to the Orient but a river navigable for more than a hundred and fifty miles inland whose banks were peopled by natives of varying degrees of friendliness. The most cordial were those who lived near the height of navigation at the site of the modern city of Albany.

These were the Mahicans, an Algonquian-speaking people, and from about the nineteenth through the twenty-third of September, they entertained Hudson and traded eagerly with the *Half Moon's* crew. So amiable were relations that at the end of his stay Captain Hudson repaid the Mahicans' hospitality by inviting "the chiefe men of the Countrey" on board and giving them "so much Wine and *Aqua vitae*, that they were all merrie"—one of them, indeed, to the point of unconsciousness. The contrast between Hudson's introduction of one powerful European commodity and Champlain's demonstration of another could hardly have been stronger; only time showed that in their own ways they were equally deadly.⁶⁵

Whatever impression their hangovers may have left with the Mahican chiefs, Hudson's reports to the Amsterdam chamber impressed the merchants sufficiently that several petitioned the States General for the right to build a fort and engage in the fur trade on the upper reaches of Hudson's river. In 1614, Fort Nassau, a tiny blockhouse on an island, staffed by ten to a dozen traders, opened for business. With interruptions, trade continued on or near the site of Albany until the larger, more permanent post, Fort Orange, was established on the west bank, ten years later.⁶⁶

The establishment of trade with the Dutch did not work to the immediate benefit of the Mohawks.⁶⁷ Far from it: the decade and a half that followed 1609–10 was a time of decline for the Mohawks and indeed the Five Nations of the Iroquois as a whole, for they found themselves increasingly disadvantaged in their competition with the Saint Lawrence Valley's Indians; their ability to acquire Dutch trade goods depended on the goodwill of the Mahicans, who occupied the territory along the Hudson. The Dutch States General's grant of a monopoly of the Indian trade to the Dutch West India Company in 1621 and the subsequent establishment of Fort Orange as a company post in 1624 brought the affairs of the Mohawks to a crisis. Interested in dealing with Indians as close as possible to source of peltry, the Dutch began to extend their diplomatic and trading connections northward. The Mohawks could not ignore these overtures to their mortal enemies—peoples who already enjoyed privileged access to trade goods and

edged weapons on the Saint Lawrence—so in 1622 they approached Champlain with proposals for peace. A formal treaty, deeply gratifying to the French leader, followed in 1624.

Peace with the French was but a prelude to war with the Mahicans, whom Mohawk war parties attacked soon after the treaty had been concluded. The Dutch urged the Mahicans to fight to the death and promised to aid them against the Iroquois, whom they saw as interlopers and troublemakers. Unfortunately, the musketeers of Fort Orange proved far less competent military allies to the Mahicans than Champlain and his fellow gunmen had to the Montagnais. By late 1628, the Mahicans had abandoned their bottomland villages around Fort Orange for the less dangerous uplands and mountains east of the Hudson.⁶⁸

The subjugation of the Mahican people was no welcome development to the Dutch, nor, in a more complicated way, was it immediately favorable for the Iroquois, victors though they were. That the Mohawks now commanded the routes of access to Fort Orange of course forced the Dutch to open a direct trade with them; moreover, the Dutch could now deal with the Algonquins, Hurons, and Montagnais only on Mohawk sufferance. Fewer partners meant smaller profits for the West India Company, and a set of trading ties limited to a group whose lands lay well to the south of the prime beaver country. Meanwhile, the Mohawk attacks on the Mahicans were less the product of a well-considered policy than of the freelance efforts of war chiefs and warriors, evidently undertaken without respect to the wishes of the Iroquois civil chiefs who had negotiated peace with Champlain in 1624. The success of the Mohawks in driving out the Mahicans, in other words, bespoke both a weakening of traditional controls on warlike behavior and an intention on the part of the war chiefs to dominate commercial relations with the Dutch.

It made perfect sense for the war chiefs to want to do so. Like Beowulf, "lord and lavisher of rings,"⁶⁹ the most successful Indian leaders were not only the bravest and most skillful but the most generous ones. By the 1620s in eastern North America, the most desirable gifts to distribute to one's followers were items of European manufacture. The logic of aggression was thus straightforward, but it held a terrible peril. If war chiefs usurped the policy-making functions of civil chiefs, the old ways of conciliation that had made trade the antithesis of war might be corrupted. If indeed warfare became primarily a means to achieve material ends, there might be no limit to the extent or duration of war's violence. The degree to which this was understood in seventeenth-century Iroquoia is impossible to determine, but in

retrospect nothing could be more clear than that by seizing control of the area around Fort Orange, the Mohawks had entered a new, supremely hazardous phase of their history.

“Wherefore Now Consider What You Wish to Do”

No one knew better than Samuel de Champlain that Indians controlled the destiny of European settlers and settlements in North America. Without their tolerance for colonization and their cooperation in trade, virtually all European dreams of empire were doomed to fail. To survive, Champlain and colonists like him had to steer a course through uncharted seas of intercultural diplomacy. Ultimately, their success depended on choices made by Indian leaders in America and by financiers and government officials in Europe, groups whose agendas and intentions could fluctuate with chaotic unpredictability.

Champlain, therefore, worried about the Mohawks' new relationship with the Dutch. By 1628, New France had been at peace with the Iroquois league for four years, but he had enough experience with Indians to know that the peace was as fragile as the powers of civil chiefs to control young men were limited. Mohawk warriors might at any time resume their raids against the *habitants* and Indians of the Saint Lawrence Valley. By this point he had given two decades of his life to the colony—long enough to know how much its survival remained in doubt. The resumption of war between Champlain's native allies and the Iroquois would only make things worse, especially if the Dutch sold substantial quantities of weapons to the Five Nations.

This distressed him because he had worked so hard against the odds to make New France a stable and profitable colony. He had striven to create closer ties with the fur-rich Hurons far to the west, but the Normans and Malouines and Basques had continued to poach on the trade from Tadoussac, thereby keeping the company's profits so small as to discourage investors. As a result, the company remained seriously undercapitalized and Quebec's population had not risen above seventy to eighty *habitants*. Moreover, New France had yet to become agriculturally self-sustaining, which gave Champlain considerable anxiety as he contemplated his colony's vulnerability to attack.

Things had begun to look up, it was true, after the 1624 peace agreement

with the Iroquois, when an extraordinary cleric, Cardinal Richelieu, came to dominate the politics of the French court. Richelieu took a keen interest in Canada, which he perceived not only as a trading venture but as an engine for expanding French influence internationally. In 1627, the cardinal sponsored the formation of the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France* (known, because of the number of courtiers, clerics, and merchants who held stock in it, as the Company of One Hundred Associates) to colonize, trade with, and evangelize in Canada. In return for the right to grant lands in the Saint Lawrence Valley and a monopoly on every economic activity in the colony except fishing, the company agreed to settle 4,000 colonists in Canada over the coming fifteen years and to pay the expenses of a new Jesuit initiative to convert the Indians. The first four hundred colonists left France in May 1628 aboard a convoy of five ships. Neither the settlers nor their ships, however, reached Quebec.

Unfortunately for Champlain's hopes, Richelieu's Catholic zeal had also stimulated an armed revolt by France's Protestants in 1625. England supported the rebels and declared war on France in 1626, but the Huguenots' hope of success faded two years later when the military incompetence of the Duke of Buckingham left them trapped in La Rochelle, besieged by a massive army under Richelieu's direct command. Hoping to distract the French by attacking their interests elsewhere (and to reap a tidy profit in the process), an English merchant long based in Dieppe, Gervase Kirke, obtained a letter of marque from King Charles I authorizing him to launch a privateering expedition against Quebec. Ships under the command of his French-born sons, David, Thomas, and Louis, were therefore waiting to pick off the Hundred Associates' convoy as it sailed up the Saint Lawrence with the colonists and supplies that Champlain desperately needed. By that time they had already seized all the shipping and trade goods they had found at Tadoussac and offered the booty to the Montagnais in return for furs. The Montagnais, always in search of new trading partners, were only too happy to oblige.⁷⁰

David Kirke paused long enough from harvesting profits at Tadoussac to dispatch several small vessels upriver as far as Cape Tourmente, twenty miles below Quebec, the spot where, the Montagnais informed him, the colony pastured its cattle. Kirke's men herded the animals into the barn, barred its doors, and burned it to the ground. Then they sent Champlain an exquisitely courteous note from Kirke, inviting him to capitulate. “I know,” the letter read,

that when you are distressed for want of food, I shall more easily obtain what I desire—which is, to take your settlement. And in order to prevent any ship arriving, I am determined to remain [at Tadoussac] until the season of navigation has closed, so that no ship may come to revictual you. Wherefore now consider what you wish to do: whether you are willing to surrender the settlement or not; for, sooner or later, with God's help, I must have it.⁷¹

Champlain, well-versed in the etiquette of European siege warfare, declined with equal politesse. The barn, he wrote, had been only a little thatched hut (*une petite chaumière*), while the immolated cattle were but “a few beasts dead which in no way diminish what we depend on for our living.” In view of Quebec's supplies of “grain, Indian corn, pease, and beans, not to mention what this country produces,” surrender would be unthinkable: “honour demands that we fight to the death.” Therefore, he concluded, “We are now waiting from hour to hour to receive you, and resist . . . the claims you are making on these places.”⁷²

It was all bravado. The barn had been no mere *chaumière* but a big stable in the Norman style, sixty feet long and twenty wide. The beasts had been Quebec's entire cattle herd. Despite Champlain's warnings to investors who saw little utility in sending farmers to a trading colony, New France had not yet begun to produce much food of its own. Because only a few acres had been brought under cultivation so far—most of them by hand hoeing, since oxen were first used to plough in the spring of 1628—the colonists still relied on provision shipments from France. Unfortunately, the supply ship for the present year had been in the convoy Kirke seized. Thus when Kirke's ultimatum arrived, the total stock of gunpowder in Quebec's Fort Saint-Louis amounted to fifty pounds, and the storehouse held only “four or five barrels of quite poor biscuit, which was not much, and some peas and beans, . . . without any other commodities.”⁷³ Champlain immediately cut the ration of peas to seven ounces a day, hoping that the English would leave in time for relief vessels to arrive before winter.

Unfortunately, Kirke made good on his threat to wait until ice made navigation on the Saint Lawrence impossible, and no supply ship came. As bad as that was, however, it did not necessarily doom the colony. If the local Montagnais and Algonquins could supply them with eels and moose, the *habitants* could pass the winter without starving. But that fall, in return for the exorbitant price of a hundred beaver pelts, the Montagnais traded only twelve hundred eels to the French. In the winter, only one chief, Chomina,

offered to have his hunters provide moose, and they brought in only “a small number for so many persons.”⁷⁴ By May 1629, the French were surviving on roots grubbed up in the woods. Champlain began to contemplate abandoning the colony.

The heart of Quebec's problem lay not in the absence of food—in fact, the eel run had been heavy that fall and moose remained plentiful all winter—but rather in the unwillingness of the Indians to trade. That, in turn, stemmed from an incident that had taken place in October 1627, when “some savages” murdered two French cowherds driving cattle from the meadows of Cape Tourmente to Quebec. The Montagnais maintained that the killers had been Iroquois raiders or perhaps renegade Algonquins from upriver, but Champlain knew perfectly well they had done it themselves. He therefore ordered one suspect to be imprisoned and took three hostages, promising to release them only when the Indians turned over the criminals.⁷⁵

The Montagnais would probably have been willing to make payments in reparation for the killings had Champlain made his demands in that form, but to turn the killers over to him for trial and execution, as he required, was entirely alien to Montagnais notions of justice. By the same token, they understood the taking of a prisoner and hostages as grave provocations. So long as Champlain held them captive, Indian relations remained poised on a knife-edge of hostility. Thus when Kirke's raiding party showed up at Cape Tourmente, the Montagnais not only made no effort to resist the landing but sent messengers to tell Champlain that *French* ships had appeared downriver. Moreover, Champlain soon learned that the “perfidious and treacherous” Montagnais had actually cooperated in the destruction of the cattle: a visit to Cape Tourmente revealed that “some six cows” had escaped burning, “but these the savages had killed.”⁷⁶

In spite of everything, Champlain held the prisoner all winter, insisting that the Montagnais turn over his accomplices. In June, with the colonists entirely out of preserved food and living mainly on groundnuts and roots, Champlain finally gave up and offered to turn the prisoner over to Chomina, the only chief who had maintained relations with the French. He hoped vaguely that the other local leaders would see this as a sign of favor and recognize Chomina as their spokesman. But in fact the colony was entirely at the mercy of the Montagnais:

We had to let [the criminal] go or live in continual alarm and apprehension with those savages, who would not have been disposed to render help in our necessity. Indeed, seeing us feeble, and weak in

number and left without help, they might have made an attack upon us, or on those who went to look for roots in the woods.⁷⁷

If the English came back, Champlain knew, he would have no hope of holding out without the support of the Indians. But in fact it was already too late.

The Kirke brothers returned with three ships mounting twenty-two cannon and carrying a hundred and fifty armed men on the morning of July 19. On the heights above Quebec, Fort Saint-Louis had seven cannon, about fifty cannonballs, and forty pounds of gunpowder. The small arms in the arsenal totaled nineteen muskets, ten halberds, and a dozen pikes. The colony's defense force consisted of eighty malnourished men, women, and children. Champlain, seeing the hopelessness of his position, sat down to draw up terms for the colony's surrender.

It was a bloodless conquest and—apart from the trade goods and furs that the company lost—an easy peace. Champlain, the other company officers, and several priests were given passage home. The colonists, traders, and interpreters remained, retained their property, and went to work for a new set of masters, who immediately reprovisioned the colony and began to exploit its commercial potential. That fall the Kirkes sent home furs valued at nearly thirty thousand pounds sterling. The following year they exported the highest number of beaver pelts ever, thirty thousand in all, worth seventy-five thousand pounds.⁷⁸

The Kirkes found little but profit in the conquest of Quebec; Champlain felt nothing but pain. He had done everything humanly possible to sustain the colony, and failed. He had warned the company, year after year, that the lack of agricultural self-sufficiency made the colony vulnerable to seizure by an opportunistic, commercially minded enemy like England. By closing the Saint Lawrence to the supply vessels without which the colonists could neither eat nor supply the trade goods necessary for good Indian relations, the Kirkes had given Champlain the bitter gift of vindicated prophecy. Yet if he was fully honest with himself, he must also have realized that the damage he had done to relations with the Montagnais had been the critical factor in the loss of the colony. There was simply no way that a group of French traders, farmers, and missionaries located deep in the interior of North America could survive in the absence of an amicable (or at least mutually profitable) relationship with the natives. Ultimately, the fate of New France lay in the hands of *les sauvages*.

Despite the humiliation of losing the colony, Champlain spent the next three years in France working to revive interest in Canada and its future, and

he went back as soon as he could after England returned the colony at the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1632). He planned to strengthen New France from the inside out. Whereas Quebec before the conquest had been a morally lax and religiously heterodox place, the spiritual life of the colony was now to be given into the hands of the Society of Jesus, an order noted no less for its zeal than its rigor. Equally important were the efforts he made to place relations with the Montagnais on a new footing. Immediately after arriving in May 1633, he limited the trade in alcohol, which the English had used to boost the volume of furs brought in to trade; promised that he would protect them from their enemies, the Iroquois, whose raids had been increasing in severity and frequency; and made a diplomatic speech in which he promised the Montagnais chief Capitana that "Our sons shall wed your daughters and henceforth we shall be one people."⁷⁹ All this, he hoped, would reassure the Indians of his friendship and ensure that the French would never again be compelled to deliver Quebec into the hands of an invader.

Events soon proved the frailty of these hopes. When Iroquois raiders killed two *habitants* near Quebec in early June, Champlain realized that the Five Nations, now armed by the Dutch, posed a grave threat to the French themselves. When a delegation of Hurons appealed for arms and aid not long after, Champlain conceived a bold plan that would not only deal with the Iroquois but bind the northern Indians once more to the French. He wrote to Richelieu asking that 120 soldiers be permanently stationed in New France. He would place those troops at the head of a grand alliance of Huron, Algonquin, and Montagnais warriors and lead them on an expedition through the heart of Iroquoia.

It was an audacious strategy for reversing the rising power of the Iroquois and restoring France's influence with its traditional Indian allies. Given that gunpowder arms were not yet in widespread use even among the Mohawks, it was by no means an irrational gambit. Given the unlikelihood that a man of Champlain's age—sixty-three—could actually lead such a campaign, it was also, obviously, a chimera. When the cardinal did not reply to his request for troops, Champlain did not renew it.⁸⁰ Instead, he contented himself with refurbishing Fort Saint-Louis and building fortified trading posts at strategic locations along the Saint Lawrence from Richelieu Island above Quebec to the Lachine rapids above Montreal. Even if he could not annihilate the Iroquois, these new posts unmistakably pledged his support for the peoples who cooperated with the French—peoples who, as Champlain now knew better than perhaps anyone else, controlled the destiny of the colony to which he had dedicated his life.

In October 1635, Champlain suffered a severe stroke. He clung to life until Christmas Day, when his chaplain administered the last rites; then he slipped quietly into eternity. The next spring, when the Hurons arrived at Quebec with the winter's pelts for trade, they also brought a great gift of wampum to console the French. It was a fitting memorial for the man who, more than anyone else, had set the course of intercultural cooperation that New France followed for the next century and a quarter. That policy of accommodation and mutual reliance, Champlain's most significant legacy, preserved the colony until the Seven Years' War—that is, until its rulers once again lost control of the Saint Lawrence to an English invader and repeated the fateful mistake of imagining that a colony dependent on amicable relations with *les sauvages* could compel them to conform to French cultural norms.

The Beaver Wars and the Imperial Iroquois

Death spared Champlain the knowledge of the darker legacies his choices bequeathed to North America's peoples. As we have seen, his dealings with the Montagnais, Algonquins, and Hurons had tipped the balance of power in the northeastern woodlands against the Five Nations of the Iroquois, who suffered heavy losses until they secured a European trading partner of their own in the Dutch. Despite Champlain's deepening concern with the Iroquois in his last years, he knew too little of their culture to grasp how great the peril of aggression would be once the Five Nations had access to large supplies of Dutch arms or how catastrophic the coming readjustment in the balance of power among Indian peoples would be. He did not live to understand that the Dutch alliance would allow the Iroquois to become the most formidable military power in eastern North America.

Champlain had known, of course, of the ferocity of Iroquois warriors. It is doubtful, however, that he grasped the cultural wellspring of the Five Nations' aggressiveness toward other native peoples. Since pre-Contact times—probably from the mid-fifteenth century—Iroquois religious life had centered on a ideal of peace among the Five Nations, maintained by elaborate condolence rituals and shared beliefs. This gospel had gathered the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas into a spiritual alliance, the Great League of Peace and Power, and for all practical purposes had eliminated mourning wars among them. Killings that might otherwise have led to war would be “covered up” by the ceremonial presentation of

gifts to the bereaved, and a council of chiefs from every clan in the League met annually to perform the rites necessary to maintain harmony among the nations. Unfortunately for the peoples who lived within raiding distance of Iroquoia, however, these peaceable beliefs had a strongly evangelical dimension. Because Deganawidah, the originator of the faith, had taught that all nations were to be brought together in the common peace, the Iroquois were obligated to offer alliance to all who would accept the gospel. Peoples who refused the invitation to sit down with the Iroquois beneath the Tree of the Great Peace could be conquered and compelled to do so.⁸¹

The lure of Dutch arms and religious incentives to aggression combined explosively with a third factor: epidemic disease. Before the close and continuous contact with the Dutch that began in 1628, the Mohawks and other Iroquois nations had been largely insulated from such deadly maladies as measles, influenza, diphtheria, plague, and—most fearsome of all—smallpox. With the end of that isolation, however, those diseases struck repeatedly and with devastating effect. Smallpox blazed through Iroquoia first, when an epidemic ravaged the whole of the Great Lakes basin in the 1630s; perhaps half of those infected died. Though those who survived the terrible onslaught of the disease were immune to the smallpox virus thereafter, they lacked defenses against other pathogens. During the half-century that followed the first smallpox outbreak, at least six more epidemics swept through Iroquoia in a succession of horrors that reduced the population of the Five Nations by half within a generation. Ultimately 75 percent or more of the Iroquois perished.⁸²

Apart from traditional cures—purging, fasting, and sweats that hardly improved the chances for survival of victims who were already suffering extreme physiological stress—Iroquois culture offered only one way to support populations suffering such losses: war. The peace that the Five Nations had negotiated with Champlain and the French-allied Indians in 1624 collapsed as warriors raided northward in quest of captives to adopt and beaver pelts to trade for Dutch weapons. For their part, the Fort Orange traders learned that despite the Iroquois' own lack of fur supplies, they could be counted on to bring in thousands (soon tens of thousands) of pelts a year, taken as plunder in expeditions against northern peoples who traded with the French.

Among the Five Nations, warfare became an instrument of commerce and survival, for it furnished the means to acquire the furs the Dutch demanded in return for the weapons that the Iroquois needed if they were to supply the captives necessary to replace the dead. Dutch scruples about