

1994

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Recommended Citation

Published in *Itinerario (European Journal of Overseas History)*, 18(2), 1994, pp. 22-39 <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=ITI>

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The Origins of New Netherland

Interpreting Native American Responses to Henry Hudson's Visit*

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When Adriaen van der Donck wrote *A Description of the New Netherlands* in 1655, he rightly pointed to Henry Hudson's 1609 voyage and discovery as the foundation of Dutch claims to the North American territory. Presumably arguing on the basis of the right of first discovery, he proposed that local Indian lore supported the fact that the Dutch-employed Englishman had been the first to discover and explore the Hudson River. As a settler in New Netherland, Van der Donck had often heard the native inhabitants claim that before Hudson came they had never seen such a thing as a European ship. Thus, when the Indians saw Hudson's ship,

they did not know what to think about her, but stood in deep and solemn amazement, wondering whether it were a ghost or apparition, coming down from heaven, or from hell. Others of them supposed her to be a strange fish or sea monster.¹

Van der Donck and his fellow colonists probably found the Indians' accounts amusing and, for the sake of supporting their claim to the region, valuable. Historians and anthropologists since that time have also found the Indian response to Hudson interesting. Focusing primarily on the European accounts generated by Hudson's expedition, however, these scholars have come to a different conclusion than Van der Donck and argue that Hudson was not the first European with whom the Indians made contact, since the Indians apparently seemed familiar with the whites and readily interacted with them. Other Europeans, they argue, must have arrived on the scene before Hudson.²

Which interpretation is correct? It is true that throughout the sixteenth century European explorers, traders, fishermen, and slavers landed at various points along America's eastern coast.³ On the surface, it seems reasonable to assume that the Indians of the Hudson River region should have come in contact with Europeans during this time. Those who argue that the Indians' reception of Hudson proves earlier contact with Europeans are assuming that such contact could have taken place, but they are only basing their argument on the evidence recorded by Hudson and his crew.

Likewise, Van der Donck made his own assumptions – that Hudson was the first to land there and that the Indians' oral accounts referred to this visit.

One thing can be clearly argued from the Indians' story: the coming of the Europeans made a significant impression on them. So much so, in fact, that they reported their encounter to the inhabitants of the surrounding villages and tribes. Moreover, this story became deeply entrenched in the Indians' oral tradition and was still being told over 150 years later.⁴ Although this tradition only vaguely corresponds with the details of Hudson's visit to the region, it is instructive because it illuminates and helps explain the behavior and attitudes of Native Americans upon their first encounter with Europeans, whoever they may have been. To properly interpret the account of Hudson and his crew, one must look not only at their experience, but that of other Europeans who encountered Indians for the first time in the Americas. These encounters, when viewed against the backdrop of the oral Indian accounts, demonstrate that although the Indians gladly welcomed Hudson and traded with him, they did so for reasons best explained by an understanding of Indian culture. It was the unique aspects of Native American society, not an earlier encounter with Europeans, which led them to receive Hudson and his crew in such a friendly and generous fashion. Furthermore, it was the nature of this welcome and the Indians' apparent willingness to trade with the Europeans which led to further European-Indian contact in the Hudson River region and the eventual establishment of New Netherland.⁵

I

Most of the Indians who lived along the Hudson River belonged to the Munsee-speaking branch of the Lenapes. The Lenapes have been traditionally referred to as Delawares. Although they were generally organized on the basis of local kinship and village connections, it is common to refer to them collectively as Delawares or Lenapes. Other tribes, such as the Catskills and Mahicans, lived further upstream. In the eighteenth century, many of the descendants of the Lenape village and kinship groups sharing the Munsee dialect merged together to form a single tribe. It was members of this group, the Munsees, with whom John Heckewelder, a Moravian missionary, worked in the eighteenth century. During this time he recorded the familiar story of Munsee's first encounter with Europeans. Reporting what he heard verbatim,⁶ Heckewelder wrote:

A long time ago, when there was no such thing known to the Indians as people with *white skin*, (their expression,) some Indians who had been out a-fishing, and where the sea widens, espied at a great distance something remarkably large swimming, or floating on the water, and such as they had never seen before. They immediately returning to the shore apprised their countrymen of what

they had seen, and pressed them to go out with them and discover what it might be. These together hurried out, and saw to their great surprise the phenomenon, but could not agree what it might be; some concluding it either to be an uncommon large fish, or other animal, while others were of the opinion it must be some very large house.⁷

Unsure of what they had seen or what they should do about it, these fishermen sent 'runners and watermen' to inform the 'scattered chiefs' and call in the 'warriors':

These arriving in numbers, and themselves viewing the strange appearance, and that it was actually moving towards them, (the entrance of the river or bay,) concluded it to be a large canoe or house, in which the great Mannitto (great or Supreme Being) *himself* was, and that he probably was coming to visit them. By this time the chiefs of the different tribes were assembled on York Island, and were counselling (or deliberating) on the manner they should receive their Mannitto on his arrival. Every step had been taken to be well provided with a plenty of meat for a sacrifice; the women were required to prepare the best of victuals; idols or images were examined and put in order; and a grand dance was supposed not only to be an agreeable entertainment for the Mannitto, but might, with the addition of a sacrifice, contribute towards appeasing him, in case he was angry with them. The conjurors were also set to work, to determine what the meaning of this phenomenon was, and what the result would be. Both to these, and to the chiefs and wise men of the nation, men, women, and children were looking up for advice and protection. Between hope and fear, and in confusion, a dance commenced.

While these deliberations were going on, updated word about the strangers arrived. It was now confirmed that this strange thing on the water was

a large house of various colors, full of people, yet of quite a different color than they (the Indians) are of; that they were also dressed in a different manner from them, and that one in particular appeared altogether red, which must be the *Mannitto* himself.

Soon, the 'Mannitto' 'hailed [them] from the vessel, though in a language they do not understand'. They responded in their own fashion although some of the Indians feared the newcomers and suggested flight. These were 'pressed by others to stay, in order not to give offense to their visitors, who could find them out, and might destroy them'. Eventually,

The house, (or large canoe, as some will have it,) stops, and a smaller canoe comes ashore with the red man and some others in it; some stay by this canoe to guard it. The chiefs and wise men

(or councillors) had composed a large circle, unto which the red-clothed man with two others approach. He salutes them with friendly countenance, and they return the salute after their manner. They are lost in admiration, both as to the color of the skin (of these whites) as also to their manner of dress, yet most as to the habit of him who wore the red clothes, which shown with something they could not account for [lace]. He *must* be the great Mannitto (Supreme Being) they think, but why should he have a *white skin*?

After they all gathered together,

A large hockhack [bottle or decanter] is brought forward by one of the (supposed) Mannitto's servants, and from this a substance is poured out into a small cup (or glass) and handed to the Mannitto. The (expected) Mannitto drinks; has the glass filled again, and hands it to the chief next to him to drink. The chief receives the glass, but only smelleth at it, and passed it on to the next chief, who does the same. *The glass thus passes through the circle without the contents being tasted by any one; and is upon being returned again to the red-clothed man, when one of their number, a spirited man and great warrior jumps up – harangues the assembly on the impropriety of returning the glass with the contents in it; that the same was handed them by the Mannitto in order that they should drink it, as he himself had done before them; that this would please him; but to return what he had given to them might provoke him, and be the cause of their being destroyed by him. And that, since he believed it for the good of the nation that the contents offered them should be drunk, and as no one was willing to drink it he would, let the consequence be what it would; and that it was better for one man to die, than a whole nation to be destroyed. He then took the glass and bidding the assembly farewell, drank it off. Every eye was fixed on their resolute companion to see what an effect this would have upon him, and he soon began to stagger about, and at last dropping to the ground, they bemoan him. He falls into a sleep, and they view him as expiring. He awakes again, jumps up, and declares that he never felt himself before so happy as after he drank the cup. Wishes for more. His wish is granted; and the whole assembly soon join him, and become intoxicated.*

While the Indians became intoxicated, the visitors retired to their ship, but after they had recovered,

the man with red clothes returned again to them, and distributed presents among them, to wit, beads, axes, hoes, stockings, &c ... they knew not the use of the axes, hoes, &c., they had given them,

[for they hung these] to their breasts as ornaments; and the stockings they had made use of as tobacco pouches.

As the preceding account demonstrates, from the Lenapes' perspective, one of the most significant features of the first encounter with Europeans and their goods was their novelty and strangeness. Having had no experience with people other than themselves, they did not know what to expect upon first meeting Europeans. As a result, they placed the newcomers in a familiar context. Applying their own Lenape worldview, they came to the conclusion that these strangers were 'mannittos'.

The idea of the Manitou, as it is commonly spelled, is central to the Indians' story and is suggestive of the religious core of the Lenape worldview. As anthropologist Herbert Kraft has described them, 'the Lenape were a deeply religious people who felt the presence of the supernatural everywhere . . . [like most Indians, the Lenapes] saw themselves as an integral part of a natural world filled with almost infinite varieties of plants, animals, insects, clouds, and stones, each of which possessed spirits no less important than those of human beings.'⁸ The Dutch who later came in contact with these proto-Munsee people recorded the word *Menutto* or *Menetto* and stated that it referred to the being the Indians worshipped or was used to describe 'whatever is wonderful and seems to exceed human capacity'.⁹

The Indians' behavior in this account, which might otherwise seem irrational or primitive, appears practical and reasonable when it becomes clear what motivated it. In their essay, 'A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade', Christopher Miller and George Hamell make a similar argument. Throughout the Northeast, they demonstrate, Indians initially valued European goods such as glass beads, mirrors, and copper kettles because they naturally corresponded to the traditional Indian categories of 'crystal' and 'shell'. The items in these categories originated in the 'other world' and were introduced to them by 'other-worldly beings'. Representing important 'cognitive and social aspects of life, that is, the well-being, harmony, and purposefulness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being,' these items were 'charged' with 'ideological value'. Furthermore, argue Miller and Hamell, because the goods the Europeans offered the Indians fit these traditional roles, the Europeans themselves were accepted. When they offered the Indians 'beads, axes, hoes, and stockings', the Indians clearly understood the value of the beads and apparently accepted the rest of the goods as being 'other-worldly', as they believed the bearers of those goods to be.¹⁰

Thus, in attempting to understand the identity of people so foreign to themselves as the Europeans, the Lenape people naturally interpreted them in terms of manitou and treasured the goods the Europeans gave them as spiritually-charged items. As the Europeans who first encountered Indians along the Atlantic coast discovered, even if they did not understand it, the Indians' assumption that the Europeans were other-worldly beings with

special powers and spiritually-charged goods, led them to receive the Europeans with cordiality and affability.

II

Long before Henry Hudson ventured onto the scene, an Italian voyager, Giovanni de Verrazzano, discovered and briefly entered New York Harbor while exploring the Atlantic coast for France. In the spring of 1524, he discovered 'a very agreeable place between two small but prominent hills', where 'a very wide river, deep at its mouth, flowed out into the sea'.¹¹

In his report to Francis I, King of France, Verrazzano continued his description of the New York bay region and the people he saw there:

Since we were anchored off the coast and well sheltered, we did not want to run any risks without knowing anything about the river mouth. So we took the small boat up this river to land which we found densely populated. The people were almost the same as the others, dressed in birds' feathers of various colors, and they came toward us joyfully, uttering loud cries of wonderment, and showing us the safest place to beach the boat. We went up this river for about a half a league, where we saw that it formed a beautiful lake [upper New York Bay], about three leagues in circumference. About XXX of their small boats ran to and fro across the lake with innumerable people aboard who were crossing from one side to the other to see us. Suddenly, as often happens in sailing, a violent unfavorable wind blew in from the sea, and we were forced to return to the ship leaving the land with much regret on account of its favorable conditions and beauty; we think it was not without some properties of value, since all the hills showed signs of minerals.¹²

Besides his passing introduction to the Munsee-speakers in New York harbor, Verrazzano also encountered Native Americans on several other occasions. Of these people, and his experience with them, he made detailed descriptions – the first ethnographical notes produced by any European of the native North Americans.¹³ Verrazzano's first encounter with Native Americans occurred somewhere near the border between North and South Carolina.¹⁴ As he and some of his crew neared the shore in a small boat, Verrazzano recorded,

We had seen many people coming to the seashore, but they fled when they saw us approaching; several times they stopped and turned around to look at us in great wonderment. We reassured them with various signs, and some of them came up, showing great delight at seeing us and marveling at our clothes, appearance, and our whiteness; they showed us by various signs where we could most easily secure the boat, and offered us some of their food.¹⁵

Other brief encounters occurred as the expedition moved northward along the coast. Near the Albemarle sound,¹⁶ one of the sailors swam near the shore and threw 'little bells, mirrors, and other trifles' to the Indians who stood there 'making various friendly signs, and beckoning [them] ashore'.¹⁷ Somewhere on the Virginia or Maryland coast, a place which Verrazzano called 'Arcadia',¹⁸ he and his men discovered two women - one older and one younger - who were in hiding with five children. Of these, one was a boy 'of about eight years old', whom Verrazzano took to accompany them back to France. 'We wanted to take the young woman', wrote Verrazzano, 'who was very beautiful and tall, but it was impossible to take her to the sea because of the loud cries she uttered'.¹⁹

Verrazzano found the Arcadians 'whiter than the previous [Indians] . . . dressed in certain grasses that hang from the branches of the trees and which they weave with different threads of wild hemp. Their heads are bare and of the same shape as the others'.²⁰ It seemed they were also quite ignorant of the Europeans, since one man, once he became assured enough, 'approached within two fathoms' of Verrazzano and his men 'and showed us a burning stick, as if to offer us fire'. The Europeans presented their 'fire' with a musket demonstration at which the Indian man 'trembled all over with fear. . . He remained thunderstruck, and prayed, worshipping like a monk, pointing his finger to the sky, and indicating the sea and the ship, he appeared to bless us'.²¹

After having briefly entered 'New York Bay, the expedition then sailed on to Narrangansett Bay, which Verrazzano named 'Refugio'.²² There they enjoyed fifteen days of rest and relaxation, while engaging in the most extensive contact they had yet had with Native Americans. Most of his account of their sojourn there is spent in describing these people and the pleasant encounter with them. Verrazzano found these people shy at first, but then friendly and generous. In short, they were much the same as those already encountered, yet more so: 'these people are the most beautiful and have the most civil customs that we have found on this voyage'.²³

After their restful period at Refugio, Verrazzano and his men continued their exploration of the coast, where they noticed a distinct change in the attitude and character of the Indians they met. Near Casco Bay,²⁴ they encountered people who

were full of crudity and vices, and were so barbarous that we could never make any communication with them. . . If we wanted to trade with them for some of their things, they would come to the seashore on some rocks where the breakers were most violent, while we remained in the little boat, and they sent us what they wanted to give on a rope, continually shouting to us not to approach the land; they gave us the barter quickly and would take in exchange only knives, hooks for fishing, and sharp metal. We found no courtesy in them, and when we had nothing more to exchange

and left them, the men made all the signs of scorn and shame that any brute creature would make such as showing their buttocks and laughing.²⁵

Later, when Verrazzano and his men went ashore 'against their wishes,' the Indians 'shot at [them] with their bows and uttered loud cries before fleeing into the woods'. And again near Portland, Maine, Verrazzano noted that 'we had no contact with the people and we think they were, like the others, devoid of manners and humanity'.²⁶

To Verrazzano and his men, these sharply contrasting experiences with the Native Americans must have seemed puzzling. From today's vantage point, however, the reasons for this change in behavior appear more clear. The evidence suggests that the hostility of some Indians was due to previous bad encounters with Europeans while the native peoples who treated their European visitors with friendliness had probably never, or rarely, met a European. For example, the hostile Indians clearly believed they had something to fear from the Europeans. This contrasts sharply with the Indians of Refugio and the other locations Verrazzano visited where the Indians may have been shy at first but were generally open and friendly. In addition, such Indians seemed to be consciously acquainting themselves with European culture while introducing their own society to the Europeans:

The king [of Refugio] remained a long while, discussing by signs and gestures various fanciful notions, looking at all the ship's equipment, and asking especially about its uses; he imitated our manners, tasted our food, and then courteously took his leave of us. Sometimes when our men stayed on a small island near the ship for two or three days for their various needs, as is the custom of sailors, he would come with seven or eight of his attendants, watch our operations, and often ask us if we wanted to stay there any length of time, offering us all his help. Then he would shoot his bow and run and perform various games with his men to give us pleasure.²⁷

Besides the malevolent behavior of the native people, physical evidence suggests that other Europeans had proceeded Verrazzano to these northern coasts. He noted that the inhabitants wore 'paternostri' beads of copper in their ears'. They also seemed prepared to trade with the Europeans and had a system to do so by which they would not risk coming into direct contact with the Europeans - passing the goods on a rope to the men waiting in their boat. They desired specific items, and apparently for their practical value. Contrast this behavior with the Indians' reception of European goods at Refugio where they 'did not appreciate . . . metals like steel and iron, for many times when we showed them some of our arms, they did not admire them, nor ask for them, but merely examined their workmanship'. Furthermore, what they 'prized the most were little bells, blue crystals, and other trinkets to put in the ear or around their neck'. When

Verrazzano offered them mirrors, 'they would look at them quickly, and then refuse them, laughing'. This seems the behavior of people who are completely ignorant of Europeans and their material goods.²⁸

Verrazzano's encounter with friendly Indians is not at all unlike the experience of Christopher Columbus and his men when they met the native people of the Caribbean, people who certainly had never seen or met Europeans before. Columbus also stated that the Indians were 'very firmly convinced that I, with these ships and men, came from the heavens, and in this belief they everywhere received me after they had mastered their fear'.²⁹ Indeed, at one point, Columbus was even crowned by an Indian chief.³⁰ And like the experience of Verrazzano and his men, Columbus's crew discovered that the Indians had a remarkable fascination for the most mundane European-made items – the sailors began a vigorous trade with the Indians selling broken pieces of glass, iron, and earthenware.³¹ Nor did the native Caribbeans always understand the practical value of the objects the Europeans possessed, for on one occasion, Columbus 'showed them swords and they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves'.³²

In light of the Columbus example, as well as the Indian account at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that the friendly Indians whom Verrazzano encountered had never met Europeans before. The native people presented themselves to them, considering the Europeans to be gods with great powers to aid and punish them, while expressing naive curiosity and wonder at the technology and material goods they brought. In contrast, the hostile Indians whom Verrazzano met toward the end of his voyage obviously had met Europeans and learned not only that they were not gods, but that they could do the Indians harm. They also had learned to value European goods for their own sake, and despite their fear, sought to trade cautiously with them.³³

III

Between the time of Verrazzano's expedition and the arrival of Henry Hudson in 1609, there is very little record of mariners discovering or exploring New York harbor and Hudson River. Although there are two possible exceptions to this, one of these visits, like Verrazzano's, was only made in passing and the other occurred well over a generation before Hudson's arrival.³⁴ The Indians' unfamiliarity with Europeans became evident as soon as Hudson and his crew encountered them.

Hudson's exploration of the river began on September 4, 1609, when he and his crew entered Lower New York Bay and encountered the Lenapes for the first time.³⁵ Similar to Verrazzano's reception at the hands of other Native Americans ignorant of the Europeans' existence, these Indians, recorded Dutch author Johannes de Laet in 1625, 'showed them every sign of friendship'.³⁶ Over the next few days Hudson and his crew met with

various groups of Indians in the lower bay,³⁷ both aboard the *Half Moon* and on the shore. The people 'seemed very glad of our comming', reported one of Hudson's crew members, Robert Juet, and they 'are very civill'. Like those Indians of Refugio who seemed to be presenting themselves to Verrazano and his men, 'the swarthy natives all stood and sang in their fashion', Hudson recorded. Furthermore, he noted 'they appear to be a friendly people', although he was quick to add that they 'are much inclined to steal, and are adroit in carrying away whatever they take a fancy to'.³⁸

Nevertheless, these early visits appeared to go smoothly and, as the Europeans reported, the Indians engaged in trade with them as well. They 'brought greene Tabacco', wrote Juet, 'and gave us of it for knives and beads'. They also gave Hudson and his men hempe and dried currants of which the Indians had a 'great store'.³⁹ While this activity was readily interpreted by economic-minded Europeans as a strict exchange of goods – a financial transaction – the Indians probably attached a different significance to it. As historian Neal Salisbury has described, the Native Americans of this region adhered to a system of reciprocity and its accompanying rituals in order to 'keep oneself and one's world in balance'. Reciprocity was often manifest in the giving and exchange of goods, which 'redistributed wealth and . . . reinforced social cohesion'. In addition, the reciprocal exchange of goods between different bands of Indians served as 'a means of establishing alliances', and may also have been motivated by 'a desire to gain access to new sources of spiritual power as well as . . . to discover a new food or tool'.⁴⁰

On September 6, the peaceful character of the encounter changed when Hudson sent John Coleman and four other men in a boat to explore farther up the river. Juet recorded that while returning from their expedition through the Narrows, these men 'were set upon by two canoes', one carrying twelve and the other fourteen Indians. It is not known who these Indians were or why they were pursuing Hudson's men, but the situation was life threatening. The sailors could defend themselves well with their matchlock, an effective weapon against arrows but useless if conditions prevent the match from remaining lit. This in fact occurred, as it began to rain during the men's flight, leaving them defenseless against their pursuers in canoes. The Indians, their weapons little affected by the rain, shot John Coleman through the throat with an arrow and wounded two others. In the dark, Hudson's men escaped the Indians, but lost their way to the *Half Moon*, not returning to the ship until the following day.⁴¹

Why did these Indian react so violently to the crew? The records provide no clear answer, but if events before and after the Coleman killing are indicative, it seems quite likely that Coleman and his men provoked the Indians. For example, in July, Hudson and his men had anchored in Penobscot Bay for several days while they replaced *their* foremast. During this time, they traded with the native people of this place and initially maintained cordial relations with them. However, despite Juet's observations that the

Indians seemed 'glad of our coming', and that they 'showed us great friendship', he went on to state that he and the crew 'could not trust them' and that they found it necessary to keep 'a good watch for fear of being betrayed by the people'. Although Juet seemed to greatly fear the Indians, he also observed that they traded, apparently peacefully, with the French on a regular basis. In fact, while the Half Moon lay at anchor there, two French-built shallops, manned by Indians, entered the bay to trade with Hudson's crew. Although the Indians offered no threat to the Europeans, Juet believed that some action should be taken against them. He and twelve men armed themselves with muskets and artillery and attacked the local village, driving 'the savages from their houses', and taking 'the spoyle of them, as they would have done of us'.⁴² Juet's paranoia again appears as he recounted their experiences in lower New York Bay. Even before the Coleman incident, he stated that 'we durst not trust them', and the crew apparently would not allow the Indians to remain on the ship for long periods.⁴³

After the Coleman incident, suspicion of the Indians began to mark the contact between Hudson's crew and the Indian people. On September eighth, Juet recorded that 'the people came aboard us, and brought Tobacco and Indian wheat, to exchange for knives and Beades, and offered us no violence'. In order to 'marke them, and see if they would make any shew of the Death of our man', wrote Juet, the crew pretended to prepare their small craft for departure. The Indians did not react to the action of the crew, but they remained suspicious. On the following day, when 'two great Canoes came aboard full of men; the one with their Bowes and Arrowes, and the other in a shew of buying of Knives to betray us', Juet reported that 'we perceived their intent'. Although Juet was uncertain that these Indians had participated in the attack upon Coleman, he kidnapped two of them, placed red coats on them, and sent the rest away. Two more Indian men came later that day, and the crew again kidnapped one of them, but he soon escaped by jumping overboard.⁴⁴

Despite Master Juet's continued distrust of the Indians and the escape of the two captives near West Point, the Indians of the Hudson River continued to meet and trade amicably with the men of the Half Moon as it made its way upriver over the next few days.⁴⁵ One of these amicable visits took place near the Catskill mountains. Here, the crew of the Half Moon met some people who were most likely Catskill Indians - similar in culture to the Lenapes, but linguistically closer to their northern neighbors, the Mahicans. Hudson accompanied some of them ashore in their canoe to visit their village:

On our coming near the house, two mats were spread out to sit upon, and immediately some food was served in well made red wooden bowls; two men were also despatched at once with bows and arrows in quest of game, who soon brought in a pair of pigeons which they had just shot. They likewise killed at once a fat dog,

and skinned it in great haste, with shells which they get out of the water. They supposed that I would remain with them for the night, but I returned after a short time on board the ship. . . The natives are a very good people; for, when they saw that I would not remain, they supposed that I was afraid of their bows, and taking the arrows, they broke them in pieces, and threw them into the fire.⁴⁶

In addition, Juet noted that the sailors again traded with the Indians, giving them 'trifles' for 'eares of Indian corne, and Pompions [pumpkins], and Tobacco'.⁴⁷

Eventually, Hudson and his men reached the approximate location of modern-day Albany where their progress upstream was impeded by shoals in the river. They spent several days there, exploring the river with a smaller boat and trading with the Mahican Indians who lived in the vicinity.

In some aspects, the encounter between the Mahicans and Europeans suggests that these Indians were familiar with the Europeans, while other aspects of the meeting suggest that they had never before come into contact with these foreigners. For example, in addition to offering food goods – grapes and pumpkins – to trade with Hudson and his men as all the other Indians along the river had, these people also brought pelts from beavers, otters, foxes, and martens. For these, the Europeans gave them beads, knives, and hatchets – an exchange typical of that which had already been occurring between Native Americans and Europeans in the St. Lawrence River valley.⁴⁸ The records fail to describe the actual conduct of the trade. Perhaps the Indians simply brought what they had and the Europeans offered goods in return. However, it seems significant that as the crew of the Half Moon sailed north from the river's estuary, the character of the goods offered by the Indians changed. All the native inhabitants gave food items, first corn, and then oysters, and later grapes and pumpkins. In addition, tobacco was often presented to the Europeans. All of these items would naturally have been a part of a Native American trade network unaffected by Europeans – gifts typically given in the reciprocal exchange of goods between different villages and tribes. But once Hudson and his men reached the Mahicans, the Indians also offered furs, the very type of pelts being traded to the French along the St. Lawrence during these decades. Likewise, the composition of trade goods offered by Hudson's men also seemed to change. Whereas earlier offerings had been limited to 'trifles', as well as knives and beads, the goods given in exchange for furs now included hatchets.

What is the meaning of such trade? Some scholars have suggested that this offer of furs proves that these Indians already had traded with Europeans before Hudson arrived.⁴⁹ Others have pointed out that the Mahicans' knowledge that beaver furs would interest the Europeans indicates that the Indians already had traded with Europeans, but only indirectly through an Indian trade network that stretched to the St. Lawrence.⁵⁰ The Indians'

familiarity with European trade goods was indicated by their acceptance of 'Beades, Knives, and Hatchets',⁵¹ especially hatchets, the use of which the Indians, according to their own oral account, would not have understood without having been introduced to them previously. Archeological findings have demonstrated that European trade goods had reached the Iroquois tribes during the middle of the sixteenth century. It is evident that these goods were acquired as part of the fur trade, because the increase of European goods on Iroquois sites was accompanied by an increase of beaver remains as well. Such extensive trade could have only come from one source - the French traders in the St. Lawrence River. Most of the Iroquois themselves had not yet met any Europeans.⁵² The Mahicans, neighbors of the Iroquois, also were engaged in such trade, perhaps via the Mohawks themselves. Armed with the knowledge of the Europeans' existence, they would not be surprised at their coming, and would be prepared to trade with them as well. As anthropologist Ted Brassler stated, 'the subsequent appearance of Whites on the Hudson river may have merely confirmed Mahican expectations of their coming'.⁵³

Despite the fact that the Mahicans clearly had knowledge of Europeans and their purpose in coming to the Hudson River, the evidence also suggests that they never had met them nor traded directly with them. For example, the following episode indicates a first-time encounter. Juet recorded on September 21, that Hudson and his first officer decided to 'trie some of the chiefe men of the Country, whether they had any trecherie in them'. They invited some Mahican chiefs or headmen to come into the Captain's cabin, and there 'gave them so much Wine and *Aqua Vitae*, that they were all merrie'. Juet noted how the wife of one of them, 'sate so modestly, as any of our contrey women would doe in a strange place'. But as Juet recorded, experience with intoxicating liquors seemed completely unknown to them, for 'in the end, one of them was drunke [and passed out] . . . and that was strange to them; for they could not tell how to take it'.

There was such concern for the well-being of the unconscious man, that after the rest of his fellow tribesmen went ashore, Juet recorded that 'some of them came againe, and brought stropes of Beades [wampum]: some had sixe, seven, eight, nine, ten; and gave him'. Nevertheless, he slept all night, but when the tribesmen returned the next day, they found him well. 'So at three of the clocke in the after-noone', Juet noted,

they came aboard, and brought Tabacco, and more Beades, and gave them to our Master, and made an Oration, and shewed him all the Country round about. Then they sent one of their companie on land, who presently returned, and brought a great Platter full of Venison dressed by themselves; and they caused him to eate with them: then they made him reverence, and departed. . . .⁵⁴

This initial experience with alcohol also suggests that the Mahicans had encountered Europeans for the first time, as did the actions of the rest of

the tribe after their kinsman became intoxicated. The offering of wampum and other gifts, the oration, the presentation of the country around them, all suggest that they acknowledged in Hudson and his men something that they did not entirely understand, could not explain, and to which they attached special significance, such as the Indians' response in their oral account to the first coming of the Europeans whom they called manitous. In addition, these actions seemed to fit the traditional rituals and practice of reciprocity. If Europeans had previously traded with these people, not only would the Indians already be familiar with alcohol, but they would have been more familiar with the behavior and motivations of the Europeans.

As the Half Moon moved downstream and the crew prepared for their return to Europe, similar encounters and exchanges of goods occurred, but none of these included extensive trade in furs and pelts. Additionally, there were two more violent clashes between Hudson's crew and the Indians. Despite these hostile encounters, Hudson came away with a fond appreciation of the new region. 'It is as pleasant a land as one can tread upon', wrote Hudson, 'very abundant in all kinds of timber for ship-building, and for making large casks.'⁵⁵ Hudson would not see this land again, however. After returning to England that same year, his ship was temporarily confiscated by the English crown and he was not allowed to return to his Dutch employers. The following year he was employed by his native England and perished while again exploring the North American coast.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, one of his accounts of the 1609 voyage made it back to the Netherlands. Summarizing Hudson's observations, Johannes de Laet wrote 'from all these things there is sufficient reason to conclude that it is a pleasant and fruitful country, and that the natives are well disposed, if they are only well treated'.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, the Indians of the Hudson River soon found themselves the hosts of regular Dutch visitors as Dutch fur trading operations began in the years immediately following Hudson's famous discovery and exploration.

IV

Like the experiences of Verrazzano and Columbus, Hudson and his crew confronted people who had little idea who Europeans were. Nor did the Europeans know much about the native people they were meeting for the first time. With such limited knowledge to draw upon, both groups attempted to understand each other in terms of their own worldviews. The Indians interpreted the newcomers within their own metaphysical and cultural framework. Greeting the Europeans with healthy fear and shyness combined with generous hospitality, they often believed the Europeans to be manitous - supernatural creatures with whom it would be good to establish a reciprocal relationship. The Europeans, whose explorations were founded in economic motivations, sought people who had something of value to offer.

Ironically, two peoples with fundamentally different values and different interpretations of the meaning of their contact found common ground when the expression of each of their worldviews coincided in the exchange of goods and gifts.

Although Indians and Europeans first exchanged goods under 'false' pretenses, it was the perception of both hosts and visitors that each understood the actions of the other which led to the second phase of contact - the fur trade. Thus Hudson's experience in New York demonstrated to traders in the Netherlands that the Indians had valuable furs to offer and were willing and eager to trade them for European goods. What Hudson and the Dutch traders did not understand was that the Indians' conducted such trade as a reciprocal exchange of goods because they believed they would gain spiritual power, and would keep their lives and world in balance by doing so. This *misunderstanding of motives* led first to trade in the Hudson River region and later, after the land was christened New Netherland, to Dutch settlement. It also began a slow and painful process of cross-cultural learning whose lessons often would be accompanied, as Hudson and his men had already experienced, by conflict and bloodshed.

Notes

- * Much of the work on this article was done during my 1993-1994 stay in Leiden. Many thanks go to the Netherlands-American Commission for Educational Exchange who funded my stay under the auspices of the Fulbright Program, to Pieter Emmer and Jaap Jacobs for my affiliation with the Institute for the History of European Expansion and their help in getting me settled in Leiden, to Wim Klooster and Victor Enthoven for making a place for me on the program of the Institute's semi-annual *studiedag* where I presented a portion of this research, and to R. David Edmunds, Bernard Sheehan, and Hans Vogel for reading various versions of this paper and offering helpful suggestions.
- 1 Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherlands*, ed., Thomas F. O'Donnell (Syracuse 1968) 2-4.
 - 2 Jack Campisi, 'The Hudson Valley Indians through Dutch Eyes' in: Laurence M. Hauptman and Jack Campisi eds., *Neighbors and Intruders: An Ethnohistorical Exploration of the Indians of Hudson's River*, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service 39 (Ottawa 1978) 166, 168; Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, 'Dutch and Indians in the Hudson Valley: The Early Period', *The Hudson Valley Regional Review* 9/2 (1993) 7-8; Starna, 'Seventeenth-Century Dutch-Indian Trade: A Perspective from Iroquoia', *De Halve Maen* 59/3 (1986) 5.
 - 3 See, for example, Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, A.D. 500-1600* (New York 1971); David B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Voyages: The Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York 1977); Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London 1990).
 - 4 Adriaen van der Donck recorded it first in 1650 and then published it in a different version a few years later. Van der Donck, 'The Representation of New Netherland, 1650' in: J. Franklin Jameson ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* (New York 1909) 293 (hereafter *NNN*); Van der Donck, *Description*, 3-4. It was eventually recorded in great detail by the eighteenth-century Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, 'Indian Tradition of the First Arrival of the Dutch at Manhattan Island, Now New York' in: *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, 2nd series (New York 1841) I, 68-74.
 - 5 The evidence in this article focuses solely upon ethnohistorical evidence – that is evidence relating to and clarified by a study of Native American culture. There is further documentary and cartographical evidence which should be taken into account for a fuller analysis of the early contacts between Europeans and Native Americans in the Hudson River region. For such an analysis, see Paul Otto, 'First Contacts', chapter one in: *New Netherland Frontier: Europeans and Native Americans along the Lower Hudson River, 1524-1664*, dissertation in progress, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
 - 6 Heckewelder wrote on January 26, 1801: 'As I receive my information from the Indians, in their language and style, I return it the same way.' He introduced the account by stating that, 'the following account of the first arrival of Europeans at York Island, is verbatim as it was related to me by aged and respected Delawares, Momeys and Mahicanni, nearly forty years ago'. Heckewelder, *Collections*, I, 70-71.
 - 7 This and the following quotations come from Heckewelder, *Collections*, I, 71-74.
 - 8 Herbert C. Kraft, *The Lenape: Archaeology, History, and Ethnography*, *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society* 21 (Newark 1986) 161.
 - 9 Quote from Johannes De Laet, 'New World' in: Jameson ed., *NNN* (New York 1909) 57. See also De Laet, 49-50 and Jonas Michaëlius to Adrianus Smoutius, 11 August 1628 in: Jameson, *NNN*, 126-127.
 - 10 Christopher C. Miller and George R. Hamell, 'A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade', *Journal of American History* 73/2 (1986) 311-328.
 - 11 Giovanni de Verrazzano to Francis I, July 8, 1524 in: David B. Quinn ed., *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, with the assistance of Alison M. Quinn and Susan Hillier, vol. 1, *America from Concept to Discovery; Early Exploration of North America* (London 1979) 284.

- 12 *Ibid.*, 284.
- 13 Verrazzano 'was the first commander to bring back anything resembling a detailed account of the natives of North America'. Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier, Sources for a Historical Ethnography of Northeastern North America, 1497-1550* (Toronto 1962) 112, quoted in Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano, 1524-1528* (New Haven 1970) 82.
- 14 Wroth, *Voyages*, 80.
- 15 Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524 in Quinn, *New American World*, I, 281-282.
- 16 Wroth, *Voyages*, 82.
- 17 Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524 in Quinn, *New American World*, I, 283.
- 18 Wroth, *Voyages*, 82-84.
- 19 Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524 in Quinn, *New American World*, I, 283.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, 284. Wroth stated: 'It has been customary for commentators to accept the explorer's interpretation of the Indian's action as the offer of fire, but to me it seems that the burning stick may well have been a tobacco reed pipe and the action the offer of friendship rather than of fire. This would have been more in accord with Indian practice and ritual of the day and area. We shall never know, but it is pleasant to think that the Indians of Arcadia were offering peace and friendship to their strange visitors.' Wroth, *Voyages*, 83.
- 22 Wroth, *Voyages*, 87.
- 23 Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524 in Quinn, *New American World*, I, 285-286.
- 24 Wroth, *Voyages*, 89.
- 25 Verrazzano to Francis I, 8 July 1524 in Quinn, *New American World*, I, 287.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*, 285.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 L.A. Vigneras, ed., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, trans. Cecil Jane (New York 1960) 196, quoted in James Axtell, 'Imagining the Other: First Encounters in North America' in: *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York 1992) 38.
- 30 Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr., ed. and trans., *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493* (Norman 1989) 267, quoted in Axtell, 'Imagining the Other', 48.
- 31 Axtell, 'Imagining the Other', 57.
- 32 Dunn and Kelley, *Columbus's Diario*, 67, quoted in Axtell, 'Imagining the Other', 58.
- 33 Although no documented evidence exists to prove that Europeans had preceded Verrazzano to the northern New England region, it seems quite probable that due to the heavy marine traffic to the rich fishing areas off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador beginning in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, that sailors and fishermen had begun to make contact with the Indians along the coast of Maine. Moreover, the recorded contact north of New England, in Labrador and Newfoundland, was often violent and injurious to the Indians who lived there, including instances of slave raids. It does not seem at all unlikely that such raids may have also taken place previous to Verrazzano's exploration along the Maine coast. Morison, *Northern Voyages*, 210-238, 309, 473; Kraft, *Lenape*, 195.
- 34 These were Jehan Alfonse de Saintonge who saw or entered New York Bay in 1541 or 1542 and Jehan Cossin who probably explored the region sometime before 1570. See I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York 1916) II, 29-30, 33-34; also Otto, 'First Contact'.
- 35 Hudson and his crew had earlier encountered several Native American tribes earlier on their voyage along the coasts of Nova Scotia, Maine, and Massachusetts. G.M. Asher, *Henry Hudson the Navigator. The Original Documents in which his Career is Recorded* (London 1860) 59-61, 64-65.
- 36 De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 38. The record of Hudson's voyage has been preserved in the journal of one of his crewmen, Robert Juet and by the historian, Emanuel van Meteren. Hudson's own log of this journey is lost, although portions of his descriptions

of the journey have been preserved by De Laet who had access to Hudson's journal or some other report written by him of his journey to North America.

- 37 It is not clear where the Half Moon landed and which exact bands of Munsee-speakers the crew met, although these early meetings all took place somewhere in the lower bay, perhaps either on Long Island or near Sandy Hook. See Jameson, *NNN*, 17-18 and Asher, *Henry Hudson*, 77-80.
- 38 Juet, 'The Third Voyage of Master Henry Hudson', *NNN*, 18; De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 48.
- 39 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 18.
- 40 Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York 1982) 35-36, 44-49, 53.
- 41 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 18-19.
- 42 Juet, 'Third Voyage', in Asher, *Henry Hudson*, 59-61; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 94-95.
- 43 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 18.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 20-22; De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 48-49; Meteren, 'On Hudson's Voyage', *NNN*, 7.
- 46 De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 49.
- 47 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 21.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 22; Meteren, *NNN*, 7-8; Donald Lenig, 'Of Dutchmen, Beaver Hats and Iroquois', *Researches and Transactions of the New York State Archaeological Association* 17/1 (1977) 77; Campisi, 'Hudson Valley Indians', 167-168.
- 49 Campisi, 'Hudson Valley Indians', 166, 168; Gehring and Starna, 'Dutch and Indians in the Hudson Valley', 7-8; Starna, 'Seventeenth-Century Dutch-Indian Trade', 5.
- 50 Ted J. Brasser, 'The Coastal New York Indians in the Early Contact Period' in: *Neighbors and Intruders* 153; Lenig, 'Dutchmen', 73.
- 51 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 22.
- 52 Trade goods began appearing among the Senecas at least by 1560, and by 1575 on Oneida sites, while similar finds have been made among the Mohawk sites for goods dating from 1550. Some findings in Western New York date as far back as 1525. Lynn Ceci, *The Effect of European Contact and Trade on the Settlement Pattern of Indians in coastal New York, 1524-1665* (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York 1977) 158, 170-171; Lenig, 'Dutchmen', 73, 75; Jan Baart, 'Ho-De-No-Sau-Nee en de Nederlanders: De Wisselwerking tussen de Materiële Culturen van Autochtonen en Allochtonen in 17e-eeuws Nieuw-Nederland', *Bulletin KNOB* 84/2 and 3 (1985) 98-99; Charles F. Wray, 'The Volume of Dutch Trade Goods Received by the Seneca Iroquois, 1600-1687 A.D.', *Bulletin KNOB* 84/2 and 3 (1985) 103; George R. Hamell, 'The Iroquois and the World's Rim: Speculations on Color, Culture, and Contact', *American Indian Quarterly* XVI/4 (1992) 458; James Axtell, 'At the Water's Edge: Trading in the Sixteenth Century', in: *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York 1983) 175-177; Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Long House: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill 1992) 53-54. While there is strong archeological evidence for such indirect European-Native American trade among the Iroquois, similar evidence has not been found to support extensive pre-Hudson trade, either directly or indirectly, between Europeans and the Lenapes. See Otto, 'First Contact'.
- 53 Brasser, 'Coastal New York Indians', 153. Perhaps they had received word from Indians further downstream that strangers were coming and this added to their mental preparedness.
- 54 Juet, 'Third Voyage', *NNN*, 22-23.
- 55 De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 49.
- 56 Jameson, *NNN*, 4, 34; Asher, *Henry Hudson*, ccviii-ccx.
- 57 De Laet, 'New World', *NNN*, 49.