CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

Prologue

New worlds for all: Indian America by 1775

In the summer of 1775, as news of the opening conflicts in the American Revolution spread west, a young Englishman recently arrived from Derbyshire in search of good land traveled to the "Indian country" of the Ohio Valley. Nicholas Cresswell went with a party that consisted of two Englishmen, two Irishmen, a Welshman, two Dutchmen, two Virginians, two Marylanders, a Swede, an African, and a mulatto. On August 27, Cresswell visited a mission town of Moravian Delawares at Wal-hack-tap-poke or Schönbrunn, a settlement of sixty log houses covered with clapboards, arranged along neatly laid-out streets, and a meeting house with a bell and glass windows. The parson preached through an interpreter, the Indian congregation sang hymns in Delaware, and the service was conducted with "the greatest regularity, order, and decorum, I ever saw in any place of Worship in my life." Four days later, Cresswell was at the Delaware town of Coshocton, where he participated in an Indian dance. The beating of drums, the gourd rattles, the rattling of deer hooves on the knees and ankles of the male dancers, and the jingling of the women's bells struck Cresswell's ears as "the most unharmonious concert that human idea can possibly conceive," and the sight of an "Indian Conjuror" in a mask and bear skin was "frightful enough to scare the Devil."[1]

Indian America by 1775 was a landscape of cultural polyphony, or more accurately perhaps, cultural cacophony, a country of mixed and mixing peoples. Cresswell's brief sojourn among the Delawares exposed him to some of Indian country's diversity and to its mixture of change and continuity. He saw Indians who wore European clothes but retained traditional loincloths and nose rings. He noted that they had learned to curse from Europeans, observed that white traders cheated them blind whenever they could, lamented the destructive effects of alcohol, and learned that smallpox had "made terrible havoc." He traveled with Indian girls who served as guides during the day and bedfellows

[1] *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774–1777* (New York: Dial, 1924), 87, 106, 109. Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions* (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 160, identifies the mission.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

at night. He witnessed Indian orators in council, and became something of an ethnographic observer. He had "been taught to look upon these beings with contempt," but instead developed "a great regard for the Indians" and felt "a most sensible regret in parting from them." Three months in a changing Indian world changed a visiting Englishman.[2]

The next year, a New Jersey captain in Iroquois country was struck, as Cresswell had been among the Delawares, by the contrast between the quiet and orderly church services of the Oneidas, and the noise, drumming, and chanting of Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga ceremonies. Many Oneidas by this time were Presbyterians, although traditional beliefs and rituals survived intact. Some people were literate in both English and Iroquoian. Some Oneida children attended school, many Oneidas were skilled carpenters and farmers, and trade with Europeans was a major economic activity.[3]

Other Indian communities throughout the eastern woodlands displayed similar blends of old and new. Single-family log cabins had replaced, or coexisted with, traditional wigwams and communal longhouses. At the mission village of Lorette on the Saint Lawrence, for example, the Huron Indians "built all their houses after the French fashion." In New England, Indian families who still lived in wigwams likely had their share of European-manufactured household goods, and even European-style furniture.[4] The palisaded villages of the seventeenth century had often given way to more open and dispersed settlements in which kin groups settled near their fields and livestock rather than around the village council house. Indian towns sometimes comprised clusters of small hamlets; sometimes they were large multiethnic trading centers.[5]

Indian America had always experienced changes, of course, but their tempo and impact increased dramatically after the arrival of European and African

[2] *Journal of Nicholas Cresswell*, 49–50, 105–6, 108, 113, 118–19, 120–2.

[3] Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., *Citizen Soldier: The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1992), 90–1; David Levinson, "An Explanation of the Oneida–Colonist Alliance in the American Revolution," *Ethnohistory* 23 (1976), 280.

[4] Robert S. Grumet, *National Historic Landmark Theme Study. Historic Contact: Early Relations Between Indian People and Colonists in Northeastern North America, 1524–1783* (National Park Service, 1992); Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 261; William S. and Cheryl L. Simmons, eds., *Old Light on Separate Ways: The Narragansett Diary of Joseph Fish, 1765–1776* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1982). xxx; Adolph B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, 2 vols. (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1937), vol. 2: 462; William Sturtevant, "Two 1761 Wigwams at Niantic, Connecticut," *American Antiquity* 40 (1975), 437–44; Kathleen J. Bragdon, "The Material Culture of the Christian Indians of New England, 1650–1775," in Mary C. Beaudry, ed., *Documentary Archaeology and the New World* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 128–9.

[5] Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's Travels*, vol. 2: 619; Marvin T. Smith, *Archaeology of Aboriginal Culture Change in the Interior Southeast* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1987), 94; Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724–1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 24–7.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

Cambridge
Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

people, producing what James Merrell has aptly described as a "new world" for Native Americans. "It is strange what revolution has happened among them in less than two hundred years," remarked Hector De Crèvecoeur. At first contact, America was what John Winthrop called a land "full of Indians." By the end of the colonial period, the Indians of the eastern woodlands numbered perhaps 150,000 people in a world teeming with immigrants. Most who survived did so by adjusting in some measure to Europeans and their ways.[6]

Adjusting to Indian country and Indian people also created a new world for the newcomers. Like the rest of colonial America, Indian country was an arena in which a "kaleidoscope of human encounters" generated a web of cultural exchanges as Indians, Africans, and Europeans made what T. H. Breen has called "creative adaptations" to new places and new peoples.[7] Those Indians, Africans, and Europeans were not representatives of monolithic groups, but individuals of different ethnicity, geography, gender, and status. "Indians" were Abenakis, Delawares, Senecas, and Cherokees; "Africans" were Ibos, Ashantis, and Yorubas; "Europeans" were Swedes, Germans, Scots, Irish, and English – and Englishmen from London were very different than Englishmen from Cornwall or Yorkshire.

Mohawks shared their villages with individuals from other tribes, and their valley home with people of Dutch, German, Scottish, Irish, and English descent. Delawares lived alongside Swedes and Finns before Germans, Scotch-Irish and Welsh settled their lands. Franco-Indian communities and individuals persisted long after the collapse of New France. Catholic Indians often spoke French and bore French names, wearing crucifixes as well. Cosmopolitan French communities that embraced both Indians and blacks dotted the landscape from the Saint Lawrence to the mouth of the Mississippi. Non-Indians lived and trespassed in Indian country, with or without the Indians' consent. Scotch-Irish borderers competed with Cherokee and Shawnee hunters in the latter's traditional hunting territories; Cherokee and Shawnee villages were home to Scots and Irish Indian agents; adopted white captives took their place in the kinship network of Indian societies. Runaway slaves added an African strand to the fabric of southeastern Indian communities. People who intruded on Indian country often

[6] James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); idem, "'The Customes of Our Countrey': Indians and Colonists in Early America," in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 117–56, esp. 122–4; J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Dutton, 1957), 102–3.

[7] T. H. Breen, "Creative Adaptations: Peoples and Cultures," in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds. *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 195–232. For discussion of creative adaptations between Native Americans and African Americans see J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *The Only Land They Knew* (New York: Free Press, 1981), ch. 11.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

pursued their own independence from eastern authorities and rendered ineffective much of colonial and early national Indian policy.

Indian people likewise participated in shaping colonial and revolutionary American society. They served in colonial armies as soldiers and scouts, traveled to colonial capitals as ambassadors, attended colonial colleges as students, walked the streets of colonial towns as visitors, came to settlements as peddlers, and worked as slaves, servants, interpreters, guides, laborers, carpenters, whalers, and sailors. The proximity and interconnectedness of Indian and colonial communities throughout large areas of North America gave the backcountry warfare of the Revolution a face-to-face nature that heightened its bitterness.

The "changes in the land" described by William Cronon in colonial New England were replicated with variations on other frontiers in the wake of European contact. Ecosystems, like cultures, experience perpetual change, and Indian people had been clearing and cultivating fields for hundreds of years before Europeans arrived. But the colonists, and in the South their African slaves, introduced new plants, new techniques of forestry, new agricultural practices, and domesticated livestock, which generated far-reaching changes in the physical world Indian people inhabited. Indians in Maryland had complained to the General Assembly in the seventeenth century that the colonists' cows ate their corn. "Your hogs & Cattle injure Us," they said. "We Can fly no farther let us know where to live & how to be secured for the future from the Hogs & Cattle." Later generations of Indian people incorporated cows and pigs into their economies. Old World grazing animals not only contributed to deforestation; they also brought new grasses like Kentucky bluegrass. English colonists in the south found Indians cultivating peach trees, introduced by Spaniards and diffused northward along native trade routes, as if they were indigenous to the region. Charles Woodmason noted that the Carolina backcountry had begun to "wear a new face" by the 1760s as colonists carved farms and fields out of the forest.[8]

For thousands of Indian people, the new world that Europeans created was also a graveyard. European and African people brought with them lethal diseases common in the Old World but unknown in America. Smallpox, plague, measles,

[8] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983); Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves In South Atlantic Forests, 1500–1800* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); *Archives of Maryland* 2 (1884), 15; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 309, 311–12. See also M. Thomas Hatley, "The Three Lives of Keowee: Loss and Recovery in Eighteenth-Century Cherokee Villages," in Peter Wood et al., eds., *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 241. Carolyn Merchant explains how the "colonial ecological revolution" in New England was succeeded by the "capitalist ecological revolution" and the onset of urbanization and industrialization in the early national period in *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, diphtheria, yellow fever, and a host of new diseases took hold in Indian America and produced one of human history's greatest biological catastrophes. Whole communities perished. Others lost 50 percent, 75 percent, or 90 percent of their population. Recurrent epidemics of the same or different diseases prevented population recovery. European travelers in Indian country saw abandoned villages and met stunned survivors. The new world of death even produced changes in burial practices.[9] Not all Native American populations dropped at the same rate in the wake of European invasion; in the lower Mississippi Valley, among the Creeks, and in some areas of the Great Lakes, Indian populations were actually on the rise in the eighteenth century, in part because they absorbed refugees from other areas.[10] Nevertheless, European invaders confronted Indian people whose capacity to resist often had been seriously eroded before they laid eyes on the enemy.[11] British Indian superintendent Sir William Johnson had the Mohawks inoculated against smallpox, but "contagious Distempers" continued to thin Iroquois numbers.[12] Most Europeans simply accepted the slaughter; but on at least one occasion the British actively promoted it. When two Delawares came into Fort Pitt for talks during Pontiac's War in 1763, "we gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Smallpox Hospital," wrote William Trent in his journal. "I hope it will have the desired effect." It did.[13]

The new world that emerged in the wake of European contact was also one of unprecedented violence. Social disruption created random individual violence; warfare reached new levels of intensity. Indians fought each other for access to European guns, then turned the guns on their enemies with deadly effect.[14] Increasingly dependent upon European allies for the goods and guns vital to

[9] Wright, *The Only Land They Knew*, 228–9.

[10] See, for example, Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population of the Colonial South," in Wood et al., eds., *Powhatan's Mantle*, 56–60, 66–72; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 145.

[11] There is now an extensive literature on Native American demography and epidemiology. Standard works include: Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983). Some of the most recent scholarship is reflected in John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker, eds., *Disease and Demography in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

[12] Milton W. Hamilton, ed., "Guy Johnson's Opinions on the American Indian," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 77 (1953), 326; cf. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman, eds., *The Journal of John Norton* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1970), 274.

[13] "Journal of William Trent," in John W. Harpster, ed., *Pen Pictures of Early Western Pennsylvania* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1938), 103–4. See also Bernard Knollenberg, "General Amherst and Germ Warfare," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (1954–5), 489–94, 762–3.

[14] See, for example, J. Frederick Fausz, "Fighting 'Fire' with Firearms: The Anglo-Powhatan Arms Race in Early Virginia," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3 (1979), 33–50; and Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics Among the Indians of New England* (Lanham, Md.: Madison, 1991).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

survival in a dangerous new world, they found it difficult if not impossible to avoid becoming involved in the wars for empire waged in North America. George Morgan, American Indian agent at Fort Pitt, knew that Indian neutrality in the Revolution was unlikely: "They have long been taught by contending Nations to be bought & sold."[15] Intertribal warfare escalated and, again, Europeans sometimes worked to curtail it, sometimes actively encouraged it as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy.[16]

Endemic warfare disrupted normal patterns of life. Communities that diverted their manpower into war felt the repercussions in lost sons and husbands, in reduced economic productivity and increased dependence on allies, in disrupted ceremonial calendars and neglected rituals, and in diplomatic chaos and political upheaval. War became normal, and the warrior culture that was ingrained in many societies as they battled their Indian and European enemies created a stereotype of Indians as warlike, which in European eyes justified treating them as "savages." In some societies, the influence of women declined as Europeans dealt exclusively with males as the hunters and warriors; in others, women's traditional roles escaped relatively undisturbed and provided a much-needed measure of stability.[17]

In a world of escalating violence, war chiefs rose in status as civil chiefs lost influence. Richard White has painstakingly reconstructed the attempts of French and Algonkian people living in the Great Lakes region in the late seventeenth century to create a "middle ground" of common understanding and accommodation in a world of upheaval. Chiefs struggled to maintain peace, knowing that the alternative to coexistence and mutual dependency was a bloodbath. First the French, then the British, learned that success in this middle-ground world required mediation, moderation, and generosity, not force and coercion. But the Franco-Indian alliance unraveled as the Ohio Valley, once a haven between

[15] Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, George Morgan Letterbook, vol. 2: 2.

[16] E.g., Thomas Gage to John Stuart, Jan. 27, 1764, Clements Library, Gage Papers.

[17] Theda Perdue, "Cherokee Women and the Trail of Tears," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (1989), 14–15. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 30–42, discusses "the overthrow of the gynocracy" with reference to the Iroquois and Cherokees. Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerskins and Duffels: Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685–1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 131–2; idem, "Guardians of Tradition and Handmaidens to Change: Women's Roles in Creek Economic and Social Life During the Eighteenth Century," *American Indian Quarterly* 14 (1990), 239–58; Robert S. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women During the 17th and 18th Centuries," in Mona Etienne and Eleanor Burke Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Praeger Scientific, 1980), 43–62. See also Thomas Hatley, "Cherokee Women Farmers Hold Their Ground," in Robert D. Mitchell, ed., *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, and Development in the Preindustrial Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 37–51; and Carol Devens, *Countering Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Missions, 1630–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 16–18.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

empires, became an imperial battleground, and chiefs found it increasingly difficult to control their warriors.[18]

Warriors now made commitments that undermined the consensus politics that traditionally guarded against rash decisions.[19] Seneca warriors who traveled to see Sir William Johnson in the spring of 1762 explained that their sachems had not made the trip because the roads were very bad, but informed the superintendent, "We, are in fact the People of Consequence for Managing Affairs, our Sachims being generally a parcell of Old People who say Much, but who Mean or Act very little, So that we have both the power & Ability to settle Matters."[20] New leaders emerged as villages and bands coalesced in the reshuffling of population that European contact generated. Opportunists sometimes generated political fragmentation of their own: "We have been unhappy in loosing our old Chiefs who Conducted our affairs," said Pitchibaon, a Potawatomi chief in 1773; "we who are appointed in their place are no more listened to, every one sets up for Chief and make Towns and Villages apart."[21]

Chiefs who lacked traditional sanction often assumed influential roles as intermediaries and brokers with European colonists; older village chiefs found that these same roles offered new sources of authority.[22] As traditional bases of power weakened, European agents and traders cultivated client chiefs, giving them medals and gifts to buy and bolster their support. Chiefs always had acted as redistribution agents, maintaining influence not by accumulating wealth but by giving it away, thereby earning respect and creating reciprocal obligations. The gifts client chiefs gave now came from European backers and represented their sole source of influence; without allies to supply them they often fell from power. By the eve of the Revolution, British Indian superintendent John Stuart was virtually appointing chiefs among the Choctaws, where traditional patterns and functions of leadership had collapsed amid a European scramble for allies within the nation.[23] He handed out medals to Choctaw and Chickasaw chiefs at

[18] White, *Middle Ground.*

[19] For a study of the rise of a "common warrior" to a position of leadership, and his dismantling of traditional power structures in a world complicated by war and diplomacy, see Richard White, "Red Shoes: Warrior and Diplomat," in David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 49–68.

[20] *Johnson Papers*, vol. 3: 698; cf. William N. Fenton, "Locality as a Basic Factor in the Development of Iroquois Social Structure," in Fenton, ed., "Symposium on Local Diversity in Iroquois Culture," *Bureau of American Ethnology* Bulletin 149 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1951), 25.

[21] *Johnson Papers*, vol. 8: 888.

[22] McConnell, *Country Between*, 13; White, *Middle Ground.*

[23] Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 40, 42, 73–82; cf. in the Great Lakes region, idem, *Middle Ground*, 177–80.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

the Mobile congress in 1765; at the same congress in 1772 he convened the Choctaws to fill vacancies in the ranks of Britain's client chiefs created by war and old age:

> The competition and anxiety of the candidates for medals and commissions was as great as can be imagined and equalled the struggles of the most aspiring and ambitious for honours and preferment in great states. I took every step to be informed of characters and filled the vacancies with the most worthy and likely to answer the purposes of maintaining order and the attachment of this nation to the British interest.

Such interference further undermined traditional leadership structures: two years later Stuart was complaining that chiefs lacked the influence to control their young men.[24] The inroads of alcohol also deafened young men to the wisdom of their elders, and sachems lamented their inability to control their warriors in this new world of chaos and opportunity.[25] Challenges to traditional authority and declining political deference were not unique to colonial white society in the years before the Revolution.

The pressures unleashed by European invasion threw the jigsaw map of Indian America into the air, and Indian people tried to rearrange the falling pieces into some kind of coherent world. Ancient communities collapsed; new, multiethnic communities grew up out of the ruins of shattered societies. New villages grew up around French missions on the banks of the Saint Lawrence as Abenakis and other people from New England pulled back from the northward-pushing English frontier.[26] Iroquois towns seemed to absorb all comers.[27] Shawnees, Delawares, and Senecas who turned their backs on colonial society and resettled the upper Ohio Valley early in the eighteenth century acquired new identities as little-known "Ohio Indians."[28] In the Great Lakes region, the Ohio and Susquehanna valleys, and the South Carolina Piedmont, remnant groups, their old identities often all but lost to history, amalgamated. Europeans identified the new polyglot societies as "tribes." By the time William Bartram traveled through the South on the eve of the Revolution, the loose Creek Confederacy consisted of "many tribes, or remnants of conquered nations,

[24] Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1763–1766: English Dominion*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Brandon Printing Co., 1911): 229, 254; *DAR*, vol. 5: 37; vol. 7: 102; vol. 8: 110; "Papers Relating to Congress with Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 5 (1925), 158.

[25] *Johnson Papers*, vol. 12: 1035; White, *Roots of Dependency*, 74–5; idem, *Middle Ground*, 321–2.

[26] Colin G. Calloway, *The Western Abenakis of Vermont: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People, 1600–1800* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

[27] Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginning to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: Norton, 1984), 95.

[28] McConnell, *Country Between*, ch. 1.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

united."[29] Indian country was a world of villages, bands, and clans, but European pressures and the need to deal with distant capitals demanded increasingly unified responses at a time when traditional structures often were in flux.[30]

The localism of Indian politics did not confine Indian people to local activity. On the contrary, Indian communities throughout the eastern woodlands became more closely interconnected. By the middle of the eighteenth century, eastern Indian horizons had widened considerably from the world of small villages and narrow loyalties that had occupied their attention a century before.[31] Competition between European powers for Indian allegiance, and between Indian nations for European trade, dominated Indian politics and foreign policies throughout most of the eighteenth century. Indian nations aligned and realigned themselves with European allies, played rival nations against each other to ensure their neutrality and survival while retaining a flow of trade goods, and divided into factions. "To preserve the Ballance between us & the French is the great ruling Principle of the Modern Indian Politics," wrote Peter Wraxall.[32] Indian warriors and diplomats, following an extensive network of trails and water courses, traveled, talked, and fought on a semicontinental scale. Iroquois diplomacy ranged from the Great Lakes to Quebec; Cherokee towns hosted ambassadors from other nations. Henry Hamilton, the British governor of Detroit early in the Revolution, sketched an Indian whose name he forgot but whom he remembered as "one of those characters, always to be found among the Indians – He travels from Village to Village, being provided with news"[33] (Fig. 1). A multitribal conference that assembled on the Scioto plains in southern Ohio in 1770 to discuss united defense of Indian lands brought together "the Chiefs of the most powerfull Nations on the continent."[34] The cross-tribal nature of

[29] William Bartram, "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians, 1789," *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* 3, pt. 1 (1853), 12.

[30] White, *Middle Ground*, ch. 1; Merrell, *Indians' New World*, ch. 3; McConnell, *Country Between*, 225–9; Laurence M. Hauptman, "Refugee Havens: The Iroquois Villages of the Eighteenth Century,' in Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables, eds., *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 128–39. Michael N. McConnell, "Kuskusky Towns and Early Western Pennsylvania History, 1748–1778," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 116 (1992), 33–56, examines one example of prerevolutionary change in Indian communities. The phenomenon is further discussed in White, *Middle Ground*, and Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

[31] John Sugden, *Blue Jacket and the Shawnee Defence of the Ohio*, unpublished manuscript.

[32] C. H. McIlwain, ed., *Peter Wraxall's Abridgment of the New York Indian Records* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1915), 219. For examination of the complex relationship between play-off politics and factionalism among the eighteenth-century Choctaws, see White, *Roots of Dependency*, ch. 3; and Patricia K. Galloway, "Choctaw Factionalism and Civil War," *Journal of Mississippi History* 44 (1982), 289–327.

[33] Henry Hamilton, "Drawings of North American Scenes and North American Indians, 1769–1778," Harvard University, Houghton Library, pf. MS Eng. 509.2.

[34] *NYCD*, vol. 8: 281.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-47569-3 - The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities
Colin G. Calloway
Excerpt
More information

Figure 1. Sketch of an unidentified Indian, "one of those characters, always to be found among the Indians – He travels from Village to Village, being provided with News." From "Drawings of North American Scenes and North American Indians," by Henry Hamilton. Houghton Library pf MS Eng 509.2. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org