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Preface

IN the years preceding the Columbian Quincentenary the Center for Early Modern History of the University of Minnesota began to consider an appropriate way to mark that anniversary. Our general aim was to situate the Columbian moment – or “the encounter,” as it has become popular to call it – in the more general process of European expansion, and to see it not as a singular and isolated historical event but as representative of a process that had occurred many times before 1492, and increasingly thereafter. Of course, cross-cultural encounters had taken place among many peoples throughout human history, but for reasons of coherence and focus we decided to make Europeans consistently one side of the encounters that we wished to study and compare. We recognized, however, that the history of such encounters was long and varied, that different European peoples had participated, and that there may have been a cumulative effect of encounter experiences so that the attitudes and techniques carried into such meetings by Bougainville and Cook in the eighteenth century were considerably different from those of Columbus and Vasco da Gama in the fifteenth century.

Throughout our planning discussions we emphasized the bilateral nature of the first contacts and the need to understand both sides of the cultural equation. The voices and attitudes of the indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas needed to be recorded, understood, and appreciated, but also subjected to the same kind of nuanced analysis now increasingly accorded to European sources. The cultural contexts of both Europeans and non-Europeans were not unitary, and called for attention to the differences in perceptions and actions based on class, status, gender, age, and other categories.

In order to define an important set of theoretical and methodological issues and to identify scholars at work on these problems, the Center for Early Modern History invited a number of specialists to join with our faculty and graduate students in the Twin Cities in February 1988. In addition to having the presence of Peter Hulme, J. S. Phillips, and Greg Denning, whose essays appear in this book, we also

benefited from the participation of Victoria Bricker (Tulane University) and James Fernandez (University of Chicago) at this stage in our deliberations. A second planning meeting in October, 1988 further defined the central themes to be explored and selected the scholars invited to participate.

In October 1990 the Center for Early Modern History brought together twenty scholars from various disciplines and geographical areas of study who shared a common interest in the problem of intercultural contacts. In addition, approximately 100 other students and scholars also attended the sessions. Papers were circulated in advance and most of the meeting was devoted to discussion and debate of the written presentations in meetings chaired by members of the Center for Early Modern History. These discussions were recorded and transcripts later provided to the authors to help in their revisions. The revised papers, with the addition of the essays by Mary Helms and Wyatt MacGaffey, comprise the book now in your hands.

Some particular debts are owed to individuals. Lucy Simler, as Associate Director of the Center, worked tirelessly on all the arrangements for the meeting and provided the kind of hospitality that made the conference more than an intellectual experience. She collaborated on all stages of the project. Luis González, Allyson Poska, Timothy Coates, Donna Lazarus, and Paula Jorge took on the task of translating papers submitted in languages other than English for distribution to participants. Prof. Antonio Stevens-Arroyo (Brooklyn College) did a similar translation service at the meeting.

University of Minnesota graduate students Jennifer Downs, Abby Sue Fisher, Katherine French, Mary Hedberg, Elisabeth Irving, Edmund Kern, Diane Shaw, Jeffrey Stewart, Linda Wimmer, Paul Wojtalewicz, and Robert Wolff served as session recorders and aided with local arrangements. Todd Macmanus and Allyson Poska were especially helpful in the preparation of the manuscripts for distribution and serving as general coordinators of logistics. Robert Wolff, Kris Lane, and Carlos Aguirre assisted in the preparation of the manuscripts for publication.

Special recognition and thanks are due to Professor Richard Price, who, while Visiting Professor at the University of Minnesota, participated in the planning stages of the conference, provided excellent commentaries at the meeting as an invited participant, and later served as an editorial advisor.

A multi-authored volume whose subject matter spans the globe and whose authors represent a number of disciplines presents more than the usual number of editorial challenges. The reader will note certain

inconsistencies in usage and terminology between chapters. For example, one author prefers "Iran," another "Persia." While I have standardized spellings and common usages and a single footnote style has been used throughout, I have consciously not sought to eliminate individual authors' preferences. My goal has been consistency within chapters, not necessarily between them. The reader will also note that the essays are not of consistent length. This too is intentional. Authors were encouraged to take the space they felt necessary, and I hoped to provide in this book a few longer essays that exceeded the bounds usually set in academic journals. Ronald Cohen, who carefully copy-edited the manuscript, was particularly helpful with these editorial problems. My thanks also to John Jenson, who prepared the index.

A number of institutions provided financial support to the conference and to the publication of this book. The National Endowment for the Humanities (Grant #RX 21100-89) provided a major proportion of the funding. In addition, support was provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal) and the Commission for the History of the Discoveries (Portugal), The Program for Cultural Cooperation (Spain), the U.S.-Spanish Joint Committee, and the Lilly Foundation. At the University of Minnesota, the Graduate School, the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of History and the James Ford Bell Library all provided support.

The Center for Early Modern History wishes to express its thanks to all of the individuals and institutions mentioned here for making the original conference and this book possible.

Finally, I would like to personally thank all those involved in this project, and especially the authors of the essays in this book, for their collaboration, patience, and goodwill throughout the editorial process. I hope that this book does justice to their contributions.

Introduction

STUART B. SCHWARTZ

IN 1550 in Rouen, local merchants interested in securing royal support for the newly developing dyewood trade from Brazil staged a *fête brésilienne* for the visiting royal couple, Henry II and Catherine de Medici. Along the banks of the Seine, Brazilian flora and fauna were set out or imitated and a Tupinamba Indian village was recreated, inhabited by Brazilian natives brought for the occasion and, given the small numbers of Indians available to the local planners, by French mariners, who stripped appropriately naked, spoke the Indian language, hunted, and made war according to the custom of that land. The king and queen, it was said, were duly impressed at this representation of the New World, although royal aid was ultimately not forthcoming.¹ One wonders what the planners of this event had in mind as the essential elements of Tupinamba culture that needed to be selected and projected for their representation of Indian life to be convincing. Their choices contained an understood anthropology and their presentation revealed a kind of implicit ethnography. As such, it demonstrated that the contact between cultures always demands a selective understanding of self and other conditioned by context, goals, and perceptions.

First observers of another culture, the traveler to foreign lands, the historian, and the ethnographer all share the common problem of observing, understanding, and representing. In all these cases there are fundamental epistemological problems as well as a permeable barrier between observer and observed in which it is often difficult (some would say impossible) to separate the two. In practical terms, the study of these cultural encounters has generated a variety of approaches. Some scholars have seen the practice of representation itself as the essential act, to such an extent that the possible adequacy of representation to some reality, its truth or falsity, is, if possible at all, of little concern.² In this formulation, such portrayals of another cul-

¹ Ferdinand Denis, ed., *Une fête brésilienne célébrée à Rouen en 1550* (Paris, 1851).

² Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* (Chicago, 1991), 119, argues that "European

ture are important for what they tell us about the observer rather than the observed. Many other historians and anthropologists are less willing to abandon a belief in the ability of the observer to portray, record, or analyze another culture and the actions of its members, however imperfectly, in a manner that allows us to cross that barren but mysterious beach that separates cultures and peoples from each other. As anthropologist Sidney Mintz put it in a heated exchange with literary critics at a 1989 meeting in Erlangen, Germany, he for one was not willing to throw out seventy-five years of anthropological field work or see its residual value only in what it revealed about the discourse and assumptions of the observer. The tension between these alternate understandings of the both the project and the results of cultural observation constitutes an ongoing, unresolved scholarly debate.

It was Greg Dening in his study of the Marquesas Islands who employed the powerful metaphor of islands and beaches as a way of understanding cultural encounters, so that each culture forms an island that must be approached across a beach separating it from all others.

Beaches are beginnings and endings. They are frontiers and boundaries of islands. For some life forms the division between land and sea is not abrupt, but for human beings beaches divide the world between here and there, us and them, good and bad, familiar and strange . . . Crossing beaches is always dramatic. From land to sea and from sea to land is a long journey and either way the voyager is left a foreigner and an outsider. Look across the beach from the sea, there is what the mind's eye sees, romantic, classic, savage but always uncontrollable. The gestures, the signals, the codes which make the voyager's own world ordered no longer work. He does not see the islander's colors or trees or mountains. He sees his.³

In such meetings across cultures, an "implicit ethnography" existed on both sides of the encounter. Members of each society held ideas, often unstated, of themselves and "others" and the things that gave them such identities: language, color, ethnicity, kinship, gender, religion, and so on. These understandings were often implicit in the sense of being unstated or assumed, a kind of common knowledge or common sense that did not have to be articulated or codified but that

contact with the New World natives is continually mediated by representations; indeed contact itself, at least where it does not consist entirely of acts of wounding or killing, is very often contact between representatives bearing representations."

³ Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches. Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880* (2nd ed., Chicago, 1988), 33-34.

permeated the way in which people thought and acted.⁴ In time, encounters might be described and inscribed, but the underlying ideas and understandings that governed the actual encounter were at a level of reflection that is rarely recorded. People represented or "wrote" these ideas in different ways and in genres that often seem to have little overtly to do with the study of other peoples. These concepts or categories, based on previous experience, ideology, and cosmology, could be applied to any new situation and provide a structure of understandings to make the strange into the familiar and the unintelligible into the understood. They dictated the ways in which interactions took place and determined how, for example, Columbus would view the Tainos, or how the Hawaiians might respond to Captain Cook. Each group's sense of its own cultural identity shaped its perception of others, and this in turn was refracted back on self-understanding.

But the process was complicated and unstable. Whatever the previous understandings and expectations, however generalized the common understanding of "others," the contacts themselves caused readjustments and rethinking as each side was forced to reformulate its ideas of self and other in the face of unexpected actions and unimagined possibilities. Thus a dynamic tension between previous understanding and expectations and new observations and experiences was set in motion with each encounter, and modified as the encounters changed over time. Both sides might be convinced that their interpretations of the situation were correct, and sometimes cultural similarities caused more confusion than did differences. But it was the process itself that was crucial. The interplay of these implicit ethnographies, these changing understandings, and their reshaping in the face of each other, over the three centuries of European contact with the rest of the world in the Early Modern era, form the subject of this book.

The theme of cultural encounters, or "implicit ethnographies," raises some of the central questions in the fields of history, literature, and anthropology: perceptions of self and others, epistemology, and the dynamic nature of cross-cultural contact. All these disciplines (and others) have been concerned with the way in which the process of perceiving others reveals self-perception, and for some how what one says about another culture is more interesting as self-projection than

⁴ The essays in Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings* (London, 1975) and Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York, 1983) both deal with the assumed and unstated aspects of cultural definition.

as a reliable description of the "other."⁵ Differences will be noted in this book between those who focus on how the texts reveal the structure of European thought, those who seek to understand the categories of analysis used in the encounters, and those who are most interested in what the texts reveal about the observed and how interactions changed over time. The imposed insularity and tribalization of modern academic disciplines has sometimes led to a narrow conceptualization of problems that are in fact shared, but in the essays presented here the differences of focus do not overshadow the commonality of goal. Moreover, the variety of approach is to be welcomed, for we need not assume that there is an interdisciplinary perspective that is more valid than the insights that the several disciplines provide.

Clearly the problem of cultural encounters and implicit ethnographies could be studied in any number of locales and historical periods, and in no way need be limited to contacts involving Europeans. However, the peculiarities of the Early Modern Era merit special attention. The encounters discussed in these essays took place along with and as part of the expansion of Europe and the creation of its political and economic hegemony over much of the globe from the late fifteenth through eighteenth centuries. That long-term process provides a focus and a unity to the development of concepts of alterity among Europeans and other peoples and with the post-encounter processes of cultural adaptation and response.

In the years between the voyages of Columbus and Captain Cook, the peoples of the world, for better or worse, were brought into contact in a continuous way that lay the foundations for the modern world. The term "Early Modern Era" has usually been applied only to Europe between the Renaissance and the late eighteenth century, but it also seems useful for describing a stage of global history marked by the intensification of interactions that left few parts of the world and few peoples untouched.

Over the course of nearly three hundred years, the business of perceiving and judging other peoples and other customs went through many transformations in many parts of the world. And to some extent

⁵ The literature on this topic has been growing rapidly since the 1980s. See, for example, in the field of anthropology, James Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge, 1982); James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1986); George Marcus and Michael Fisher, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago, 1986); and Vincent Crapanzano, *Hermes Dilemma and Hamlet's Desire* (Cambridge, 1992).

it was the process of encountering others that contributed to the intellectual change within cultures. In Europe, the Renaissance forms and tropes of observation and evaluation seen in Columbus's journal, or the report of Pero Vaz de Caminha on the first contact with the peoples of the Americas, mix marvel and wonder with negative evaluations of technology, carrying forward classical ideas of civility and barbarism that differ considerably from the universalizing concepts of the eighteenth century. The impact of the Reformation, with its plurality of interpretations raising questions about the authority of scripture, combined with the increasing dependence on observation and experience to bring about important changes in the way Europeans saw the world and its inhabitants after the sixteenth century.⁶

Enlightenment thinkers came to view human differences as stages in a universal story. As Denis Diderot formulated it, Tahitians were closer to nature and the world's origins, Europeans represented old age, but all civilized people had been savages and all savages could become civilized.⁷ The tension between such ideas of universality and the recognition of real human and cultural diversity troubled European observers in the past and continues to plague all peoples in the present as a formula is sought for a means of understanding and for action.

The problem is a universal one. While the 1980s and 1990s have produced a flood of literature about changing European concepts of alterity and an increased appreciation of their impact, it is important to recognize that such changes occurred in other cultures as well. Sinologists who agree that neo-Confucian concepts in the Sung and Ming periods were an attempt to confront the penetration of foreign Buddhist ideas debate whether neo-Confucian doctrines created a universalist ideology that made all peoples potentially acceptable or whether they reinforced Chinese ideas of distinctiveness. Certainly by the nineteenth century, the desire to acquire European technology led to changes in the perception of and interaction with Westerners. In Southeast Asia, a different pattern developed at a different pace. Longstanding regional diversity was challenged between 1400 and 1700 by the spread of universalist religions, Islam in the Indonesian archipelago, Confucianism in Vietnam, Theravada Buddhism from Burma to Cambodia, and Catholicism in the Philippines. The spread of these faiths created new opportunities and needs for contact and

⁶ Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven, 1993), 54–87.

⁷ Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, eds., *The Enlightenment and its Shadows* (London, 1990), 1–16.