

Document A

Ecological and Demographic Impact of the Columbian Exchange Resources

The Changing Landscape

We don't know how the bone of a cow, a European domesticated animal, wound up mingled with other more traditional Munsee household refuse here [Clason's Point, the Bronx] and at other sites in the city. The meat could have been given, bought, or stolen, or the livestock could have been raised by the community. Written accounts suggest all of these possibilities.

No matter how the meat got here, this seemingly insignificant find underscores the profound and irrevocable economic and ecological changes taking place not only here but throughout seventeenth-century coastal New York. As the colonial settlements grew, Dutch and English farms began expanding more and more into Munsee territory. The colonists cut down forests for lumber, cleared fields, planted European crops, and grazed European animals. These practices radically altered local ecosystems and destroyed the habitats of many of the animals that the Munsees had traditionally hunted and the plants on which they had depended.

Compounding these changes was the tense political climate in the mid-seventeenth century. Not only did the wars take energies away from economic activities, but Munsee and Dutch also destroyed each others' crops as part of conflicts. As a result, the Munsees had to find new strategies to get food and to deal with their rapidly changing natural world, which they were now sharing with the colonists. This piece of cow bone, then, is evidence of the dramatic changes in the economy and landscape that were taking place throughout the world.

*Excerpted from Touring Gotham's Archaeological Past
by Diana diZerega Wall and Anne-Marie Cantwell.
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Document B

Miantinomo

(Narragansett)

“Brothers we must be one as the English are, or we shall soon all be destroyed.”

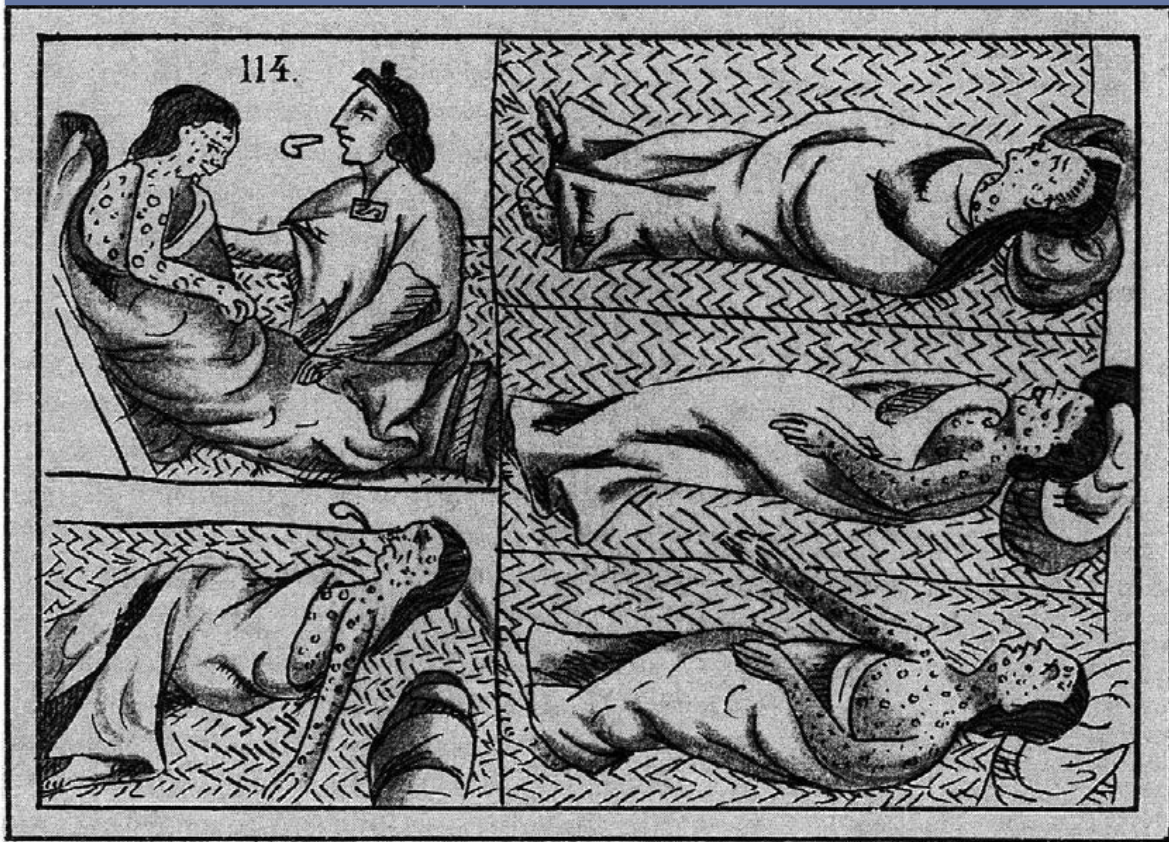
Miantinomo (c. 1600–1643) tried to organize an intertribal resistance to the English colonists, and in the following speech he exhorted the Montauks of Long Island, New York, to join him. For his efforts, unsuccessful though they were, he was executed by the colonial government’s Mohegan allies.

Brothers, we must be one as the English are, or we shall soon all be destroyed. You know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, and our plains were full of deer and turkeys, and our coves and rivers were full of fish. But, brothers, since these English have seized upon our country, they cut down the grass with scythes, and the trees with axes. Their cows and horses eat up the grass, and their hogs spoil our beds of clams; and finally we shall starve to death! Therefore, stand not in your own light, I beseech you, but resolve with us to act like men. All the sachems both to the east and west have joined with us, and we are all resolved to fall upon them, at a day appointed, and therefore I have come secretly to you, because you can persuade the Indians to do what you will. Brothers, I will send over fifty Indians to Manisses, and thirty to you from thence, and take a hundred of Southampton Indians, with a hundred of your own here. And, when you see the three fires that will be made at the end of forty days hence, in a clear night, then act as we act, and the next day fall on and kill men, women and children, but no cows; they must [not] be killed as we need them for provisions, till the deer come again.

Great Speeches by Native Americans
Edited by Bob Blaisdell

Document C

Florentine Codex



Compiler: Bernardino de Sahagún

Native American resistance to the Europeans was ineffective. Indigenous peoples suffered from white brutality, alcoholism, the killing and driving off of game, and the expropriation of farmland, but all these together are insufficient to explain the degree of their defeat. The crucial factor was not people, plants, or animals, but germs. The history of the United States begins with Virginia and Massachusetts, and their histories begin with epidemics of unidentified diseases. At the time of the abortive Virginia colony at Roanoke in the 1580s the nearby Amerindians “began to die quickly. The disease was so strange that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it.”^[1] When the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620, they did so in a village and on a coast nearly cleared of Amerindians by a recent epidemic. Thousands had “died in a great plague not long since; and pity it was and is to see so many goodly fields, and so well seated, without man to dress and manure the same.”^[2]

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Smallpox was the worst and the most spectacular of the infectious diseases mowing down the Native Americans. The first recorded pandemic of that disease in British North America detonated among the Algonquin of Massachusetts in the early 1630s: William Bradford of Plymouth Plantation wrote that the victims “fell down so generally of this disease as they were in the end not able to help one another, no not to make a fire nor fetch a little water to drink, nor any to bury the dead.”^[3]

The missionaries and the traders who ventured into the American interior told the same appalling story about smallpox and the indigenes. In 1738 alone the epidemic destroyed half the Cherokee; in 1759 nearly half the Catawbans; in the first years of the next century two-thirds of the Omahas and perhaps half the entire population between the Missouri River and New Mexico; in 1837–1838 nearly every last one of the Mandans and perhaps half the people of the high plains.

European explorers encountered distinctively American illnesses such as Chagas Disease, but these did not have much effect on Old World populations. Venereal syphilis has also been called American, but that accusation is far from proven. Even if we add all the Old World deaths blamed on American diseases together, including those ascribed to syphilis, the total is insignificant compared to Native American losses to smallpox alone.

[1] David B. Quinn, ed. *The Roanoke Voyages, 1584–1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), 378.

[2] Edward Winslow, Nathaniel Morton, William Bradford, and Thomas Prince, *New England's Memorial* (Cambridge: Allan and Farnham, 1855), 362.

[3] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, ed. Samuel E. Morison (New York: Knopf, 1952), 271.

*The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
The Columbian Exchange
Author: Alfred Crosby*

*From AFRICANS IN AMERICA
(<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr4.html>) © 1998, 1999 WGBH Educational Foundation*

Document D

The African Slave Trade and the Middle Passage

This African chant mourns the loss of Olaudah Equiano, an 11-year-old boy and son of an African tribal leader who was kidnapped in 1755 from his home in what is now Nigeria. He was one of the 10 to 12 million Africans who were sold into slavery from the 15th through the 19th Centuries.

Who are we looking for, who are we looking for?

It's Equiano we're looking for.

Has he gone to the stream? Let him come back.

Has he gone to the farm? Let him return.

It's Equiano we're looking for.

- Kwa chant about the disappearance of an African boy, Equiano

*From AFRICANS IN AMERICA (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr4.html>) © 1998,
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At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died – thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the gaffing of the chains, now became insupportable, and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with, served only to render my state more painful, and heightened my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites...

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active, were in a moment put down under the deck; and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African
Author: Olaudah Equiano