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The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., Vol. 37, No. 3 (Jul., 1980), 451-472.

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Notes and Documents

The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping?

James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant

THE traditional wisdom of American history asserts that the “savage” Indians scalped “civilized” whites in their resistance to the “taming” of the continent. Accordingly, when the invasion of North America began, the Europeans were innocent of the practice, and though they eventually adopted it for their own bloody purposes, their teachers were still Indians, who had invented and perfected the art. Increasingly in recent years, this traditional wisdom has been assailed as a serious distortion. When advocates of the Indian cause, native or white, engage their opponents in court or print, they frequently arm themselves with a new version of scalping’s ignoble history.

The new version was born perhaps in 1820 when Cornplanter, an Alleghany Seneca chief, grew despondent over the disintegration of his nation. In a series of visions the Great Spirit told him that he should have nothing more to do with white people or with war, and commanded him to burn all his old military trophies, which he promptly did on a huge pyre of logs. The reason, as Cornplanter told it, was that before the whites came, the Indians “lived in peace and had no wars nor fighting.” But then “the French came over,” followed closely by the English, and these two nations began to fight among themselves. Not content to wage their own battles, each tried to involve the Iroquois. “The French,” said Cornplanter, “offered to furnish us with instruments of every kind and sharp knives to take the skins off their [enemies’] heads.”¹

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¹ “Cornplanter’s talk,” Draper Collection, 16 F 277, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. We are grateful to Anthony F. C. Wallace for this reference. See his *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, 1970), 327-328. Chronologically next, although rarely if ever cited, are the 1864 comments of the oriental-

We next hear the new history of scalping in 1879 when Susette La Flesche, a spirited daughter of a famous Omaha family, was interviewed by a newspaper reporter on the Chicago stop of her national tour to advocate justice for Indians. When she protested the United States Army's wholesale killing of Ute men, women, and children in a recent encounter, the reporter shot back, "But you are more barbarous in war than we, and you shock the public by the acts of atrocity upon captives and the bodies of the dead." "Scalping, you mean, I suppose," countered the young woman. "Don't you know that the white man taught Indians that? It was practiced first in New England on the Penobscot Indians. The General Court of the Province of Massachusetts offered a bounty of forty pounds for every scalp of a male Indian brought in as evidence of his being killed, and for every scalp of a female or male Indian under twelve years, twenty pounds."²

Cornplanter's and La Flesche's rejections of the traditional wisdom of scalping are significant not only for their chronological priority but because they consecrated the polemical marriage of scalp bounties with the invention of scalping in the "new wisdom." In 1968, for example, the literary critic and moralist Leslie Fiedler asserted that scalping "seems not to have been an Indian custom at all until the White Man began offering bounties for slain enemies." And environmental writer Peter Farb, putting his finger on New Netherland's Governor Willem Kieft instead of the Massachusetts legislature, remarked that "whatever its exact origins, there is no doubt that [the spread of] scalp-taking . . . was due to the barbarity of White men rather than to the barbarity of Red men." In the following year Edgar Cahn and the Citizens' Advocate Center, citing Farb as their sole authority, more confidently but even more ambiguously concluded that "contrary to Hollywood's history book, it was the white man who created the tradition of scalping."³

list and early anthropologist Richard F. Burton. He cited Herodotus on Scythian scalping and mentioned several references "to prove that the Anglo-Saxons and the French still scalped about A.D. 879," concluding from this, in the Eurocentric diffusionist fashion of his time, that "the modern American practice is traceable to Europe and Asia," even though he also clearly believed it to be pre-Columbian in America (since he said that although the modern scalp knife is iron, "formerly it was of flint, obsidian, or other hard stone") ("Notes on Scalping," *Anthropological Review*, II [1864], 48-52). Georg Friederici reported that his extensive search for Burton's references—other than Herodotus—was fruitless (*Skalpiereu und ähnliche Kriegsgebräuche in Amerika* [Braunschweig, 1906], 134).

² Dorothy Clarke Wilson, *Bright Eyes: The Story of Susette La Flesche, an Omaha Indian* (New York, 1974), 221.

³ Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York, 1968), 42; Peter Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primeval Times to the Coming of the Industrial State* (New York, 1968), 123-124; Edgar S. Cahn, ed., *Our Brother's Keeper: The Indian in White America* (Washington, D.C., 1969), 176, italicized in original.

To counter the baneful effects of Hollywood westerns, the new wisdom was taken up by the powerful media of the East, among them NBC television and *The New Yorker Magazine*. The week before Christmas in 1972, several million viewers of "Hec Ramsey" received a mini-lesson in history from the show's star, Richard Boone, when he carefully explained to a sidekick that the Puritans (of New England presumably) taught the Iroquois (of New York presumably) to scalp by offering them bounties for enemy hair. And when Ray Fadden, the curator of his own Six Nations Indian Museum in the Adirondacks, asked a reporter from *The New Yorker* if he knew that "scalping, skinning alive, and burning at the stake were European barbarian inventions, forced on Indian mercenaries," nearly half a million readers heard the rhetorical answer.⁴

White friends of the Indians have been the most frequent advocates of the new wisdom in print, so it is not surprising that when several were called as character witnesses for Indian culture in the trials resulting from the American Indian Movement occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, they used it in their testimony. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., the author of four books on the American Indians, testified at the trial in Lincoln, Nebraska, that "scalping was not originated by Indians. Poachers in England had their ears cut off. Europeans had the habit of taking parts of the body in war. The Dutch gave rewards for Indian heads even before there was open warfare in their area of colonization." In a refinement of Peter Farb's earlier attribution, he said that "Indian heads were put on pikes there very early, but people got tired of lugging in the heads so soon they just brought in the scalp to show that they had killed an Indian."⁵

Yet white advocacy has carried the new wisdom only so far. One of the political assumptions of the current Indian movement is that Indians should do their own talking and write their own history in order to help them gain control of their own destiny. Accordingly, when Vine Deloria issued his "Indian Manifesto" in 1969 under the pointed title of *Custer Died for Your Sins*, he soon became for many people the leading Indian spokesman. Not surprisingly, in a book filled with effective sallies against white America's treatment of native Americans, he employed the symbol of scalping. "Scalping, introduced prior to the French and Indian War by the English," he accused, citing a 1755 Massachusetts scalp bounty, "con-

⁴ "Hec Ramsey," NBC-TV, Dec. 18, 1972; *The New Yorker*, Nov. 27, 1971, 104.

⁵ We are grateful to Mr. Josephy for a transcript of his testimony pertaining to scalping (personal communication, May 24, 1979). In 1970 he wrote that the "origin [of scalping] has recently come into question. . . . But the practice of scalping, or customs close to it—such as the cutting off of ears—was not unknown to Europeans before the discovery of America. Poachers received such treatment in England, and it is certain that, in some parts of the New World, whites introduced scalping to tribes that had never practiced it themselves" (*The Indian Heritage of America* [New York, 1968], 305). Today he states that he is uncertain about the origins of scalping.

firmed the suspicion that the Indians were wild animals to be hunted and skinned. Bounties were set and an Indian scalp became more valuable than beaver, otter, marten, and other animal pelts."⁶

Perhaps the latest and probably the most bizarre episode in the historiography of scalping took place in a church in Flint, Michigan, on September 7, 1975. Bruce C. Thum (alias "Chief Charging Bear"), an evangelist and self-styled three-quarter Oklahoma Cherokee, demonstrated "how the Indians scalped the white man" to the morning Sunday school classes "from toddler age through sixth grade." When confronted by an angry group of Indian demonstrators and parents, Thum lamely explained that "scalping came originally from Europeans" and revealed that "he ha[d] been giving such demonstrations for more than a quarter of a century, and this is the first time his demonstration had sparked any protests." His manager added: "Anything you can do to get children to Sunday school today, you have to do."⁷ The Indian demonstration prompted *The Flint Journal* to print an apology for running an offensive advertisement for the affair the previous week. Calling for an end to racial discrimination, especially in the public media, the editorial lent its weight to the new wisdom. Such a crude charade as Thum's, it said, "perpetuates the myth that scalping was originally or even essentially an Indian practice when the truth is that it was a European practice as punishment for crimes, was brought to America and used by both the British and French as proof of slayings to collect bounties offered by each side. It was only later adopted by the Indians in retaliation."⁸

The new wisdom about scalping would not warrant scholarly attention if it were only an intellectual fad or if its proponents constituted a mere handful of obscure eccentrics like Chief Charging Bear. But it has had a long life and refuses to die, and its proponents include historians and anthropologists as well as Indians, critics, and editors. More important, the

⁶ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York, 1969), 6-7. For other versions of the new wisdom see Jane Willis, *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* (Toronto, 1973), 199: "It was white men—the Conquistadors—who originated scalping"; and Robert F. Heizer, ed., *The Destruction of California Indians* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1974), 267: "Many anthropologists believe that [scalping] was not an aboriginal custom, but was a practice introduced on the east coast by the French and English, from whence it spread westward." In the film "Soldier Blue" (1971), the Indianized white heroine also attributes scalping to the "white man" without attributing national blame. The widely circulated *Heritage of Canada* (n.p., 1978), published by *Reader's Digest*, features an article entitled "Scalping: White Men Taught the Indians How," which states that "scalp-taking was virtually unknown to North American Indians before the arrival of Europeans" (p. 50).

⁷ *The Flint Journal*, Sept. 8, 1975. We are grateful to Clark Hallas for the relevant issues of this journal. The story received notice in the Indian press as well (*Wassaja*, Oct. 1975).

⁸ *Flint Journal*, Sept. 10, 1975.

new wisdom is seldom argued in the bright light of controversy, where scholarly—and commonsensical—suspicions might be raised. Rather, it is insinuated into the public consciousness through seemingly disingenuous references dropped in discussions of Indian affairs or history. When the speakers are Indians, no matter how qualified to speak of Indian or colonial history, the statements are invested with even greater credibility. National television programs and newspaper articles that circulate via the major wire services propagate the new wisdom to such huge audiences that it has become traditional wisdom in its own right and demands a fresh appraisal.⁹

The new myth is understandable as a product of Indian activism and white guilt feelings. However, the factual basis for the novel concoction seems to have been nonexistent in the late 1960s—or, for that matter, at any other time in the twentieth century. For in 1906 Georg Friederici published in German a thorough study of the distribution and history of scalping in North and South America, a study that, although it did not use certain kinds of evidence, proved beyond a doubt that scalping was a pre-Columbian Indian practice.¹⁰ Recognizing the value of this work, the Smithsonian Institution published a sixteen-page English summary in its *Annual Report* for that year.¹¹ At the same time, James Mooney was incor-

⁹ In a long interview with *The Washington Post* on July 6, 1976, veteran Indian movie actor Iron Eyes Cody blasted Hollywood for its lack of historical accuracy. Scalping, he pointed out as an example, “began with the Mexicans and the bounty hunters. They show a lot of blood and scalping today, but Indians fought each other for a thousand years and never took scalps. That’s a lot of baloney that Fenimore Cooper and all those people wrote.” In a similar vein, Art Raymond, an Oglala Sioux educator and legislator, denied that the Indians were morally responsible for scalping in an address to the National Council of Teachers of English at their 1976 annual meeting in Chicago. In a story picked up by the Associated Press, Raymond pointed his finger at Europeans for introducing scalping (*New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1976). “Do you still scalp your enemies?” is commonly asked Indians even today. Recently Eddie Littlelight, a Crow, supplied several Indian responses to this ignorant and rude question, finally delighting his French journalist interlocutor with a tale about a Crow delegation visiting Germany the previous year on a tour organized by the State Department and the many German Indian-hobbyist clubs. At a formal banquet for 300 people the question was asked once again, whereupon Big Elk is said to have pulled from his pocket a bunch of blond and brunette scalps, and cut short the banquet by replying with a broad grin that he had himself lifted these scalps in Normandy from 7 German officers, who were not even S.S. officers (Jean Raspail, *Les Peaux-rouges aujourd’hui* [Paris, 1978], 275).

¹⁰ Friederici, *Skalpieren*.

¹¹ Georg Friederici, “Scalping in America,” Smithsonian Institution, *Annual Report . . . June 30, 1906* (Washington, D.C., 1907), 423-438, hereafter cited as Friederici, “Scalping in America.” This is an abstract of the original, omitting all of the massive documentation that was typical of Friederici’s careful scholarship, and considerably shortening the details on the aboriginal distribution and post-Euro-

porating Friederici's results into his article on scalping for Frederick Hodge's *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, which was published in 1910.¹² From then on, Friederici's researches were drawn upon by the two leading encyclopedias used by Americans. The famous eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1910-1911, made clear that scalping was a pre-Columbian practice, as did the edition of 1967, which contained a new article by William Sturtevant.¹³ Likewise, the 1963 edition of the *Encyclopedia Americana* cited Friederici and Hodge's *Handbook* to prove that scalping was originally practiced by the "savage and barbarous nations of the eastern hemisphere . . . and later by the American Indians residing principally in the eastern United States and the lower Saint Lawrence region."¹⁴ Thus if the modern promoters of the new history of scalping had turned to the standard works of reference in the course of their researches, they would have come face-to-face with a wall of evidence to the contrary.

The evidence for pre-Columbian scalping takes many forms. The first and most familiar is the written descriptions by some of the earliest European observers, who saw the Indian cultures of the eastern seaboard in something like an aboriginal condition, largely or wholly unchanged by white contact. On his second voyage up the St. Lawrence in 1535, Jacques Cartier was shown by the Stadaconans at Quebec "the skins of five men's heads, stretched on hoops, like parchment (*les peaulx de cinq testes d'hommes, estandues sus des boys, comme peaulx de parchemin*)." His host, Donnacona, told him "they were Toudamans [Mimcacs] from the south, who waged war continually against his people."¹⁵

In March 1540, two of Hernando De Soto's men, the first Europeans to enter the Apalachee country in west Florida, were seized by Indians. The

pean spread of scalping in North America. Entirely omitted are sections on head and other body-part trophies, largely in Mexico and South America (pp. 77-101), on methods of removing the scalp, preparing it, and using it (pp. 105-115), on beliefs and customs relating to the head, hair, and scalp (pp. 115-131), and a survey of evidence for scalping outside the Americas (pp. 131-137). Thus most of the book did not appear in English.

¹² Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 30, II (Washington, D.C., 1910), s.v. "Scalping," by J[ames] M[oooney], 482-483.

¹³ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Scalping"; *ibid.*, 1967 ed., s.v. "Scalping."

¹⁴ *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1963 ed., s.v. "Scalping."

¹⁵ H. P. Biggar, ed., *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier . . .*, Public Archives of Canada, Publication No. 11 (Ottawa, 1924), 177. We have made our own translations from the French and Spanish throughout this article. Biggar translated "*les peaulx de cinq testes*" as "five scalps," which is faithful but anachronistic. In 1558 André Thevet noted that if the St. Lawrence Indians "*prennêt aucūs de leurs ennemis, . . . ils leur escorchent la teste, & le visage, & l'estendent à un cercle pour la secher*" (*Les Singularitez de la France antarctique* [Paris, 1558], fol. 154v).

killers of one “removed his head (*cabeza*), or rather all around his skull (*todo el casco en redondo*)—it is unknown with what skill they removed it with such great ease—and carried it off as evidence of their deed.” A lost manuscript by an eyewitness described an occasion when the Apalachees killed others of De Soto’s men, “and they cut off the crown (*la corona*) of each Spaniard, which was what they valued most, in order to carry it on the limb of the bow they fought with.”¹⁶ In 1549 at Tampa Bay local Indians killed a missionary, one of whose companions wrote immediately afterwards that a Spaniard, rescued from these Indians among whom he had been captive since the De Soto expedition, told him, “I even saw the skin of the crown (*el pellejo de la corona*) of the monk, exhibited to me by an Indian who brought it to show,” adding that he himself “had held in his hands the skin of the head (*el pellejo de la cabeza*) of the monk.”¹⁷ In 1560 a party from the Luna expedition reached the Creek town of Coosa (“Coça”) on the Alabama River, and accompanied local warriors on a raid on the enemy town of the “Napochies.” They found it abandoned, but in its plaza was a pole—certainly to be identified with the war pole of later Creek towns, known to be associated with scalps—which was “full of hair locks (*cabellos*) of the Coosans. It was the custom of the Indians to flay the head of the enemy dead, and to hang the resulting skin and locks (*pellejo y cabellos*) insultingly on that pole. There were many dead, and the pole was covered with locks.” The Coosans, much angered at “this evidence of affront” and reminder of “all the previous injuries” done to them, cut down the pole and carried off the scalps (*los cabellos*) in order to bury them with proper ceremony.¹⁸

These first accounts from the lower southeast are consistent with the details described and illustrated by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues from his first-hand observations in 1564 while accompanying Timucua warriors on raids near Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River in northeastern Florida.

¹⁶ Garcilaso de la Vega, *La Florida del Inca*, ed. Emma Susana Sperati (Mexico City and Buenos Aires, 1956), 181, 182. In Garcilaso de la Vega, *The Florida of the Inca . . .*, trans. and ed. John Grier Varner and Jeannette Johnson Varner (Austin, Tex., 1951), 257, 258-259, the translators justify their use of “scalp” in these two passages.

¹⁷ Fray Gregorio de Beteta, “Relacion de la Florida . . . [1549],” in Buckingham Smith, *Colección de varios documentos para la historia de la Florida*, I (London, 1857), 190-202, esp. 196, 200; full translation in David B. Quinn, ed., *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, II (New York, 1979), 190-197.

¹⁸ Fray Augustin Davila Padilla, *Historia de la fundacion y discurso de la Prouincia de Santiago de Mexico* (Madrid, 1596), 260. A rather too free translation of this section is in John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and Their Neighbors*, Smithsonian Inst., Bur. of Am. Ethnol., Bull. 73 (Washington, D.C., 1922), 231-239, and reprinted in Quinn, ed., *New American World*, II, 240-247 (the relevant passage is on p. 245).

He wrote,

In these skirmishes those who fall are immediately dragged out of the camp by those entrusted with this responsibility, and they cut the skin of the head down to the skull (*capitis cutim ad cranium*) with pieces of reed sharper than any steel blade, from the brow in a circle to the back of the head; and they pull it off whole, gathering the hair, which is still attached to it and more than a cubit long, into a knot at the crown; and what there is over the brow and back of the head they cut off in a circle to a length of two fingers, like the fringe around a skull-cap; on the spot (if there is enough time) they dig a hole in the ground and kindle a fire with moss. . . . Having got the fire going, they dry the skin (*cutim*) and make it hard like parchment . . . and with the head skins (*capitisque cutim*) hanging from the ends of their javelins they triumphantly carry them off home.

On returning to the village they placed the enemies' legs, arms, and scalps ("*capitisque cutim*") "with solemn ceremony on very long stakes which they have fixed in the ground in a kind of row" for a subsequent ritual.¹⁹

Then for almost forty years the European exploration and settlement of eastern North America subsided into insignificance. Not until Samuel de Champlain re-explored the Canadian and New England coasts in the early years of the seventeenth century did scalping find another memorialist. In 1603 Champlain was invited to feast with the Montagnais sagamore Anadabijou and his warriors to celebrate their recent victory over the Iroquois. When they ended the feast they began to dance, "taking in their hands . . . the scalps (*testes*) of their enemies, which hung behind them. . . . They had killed about a hundred, whose scalps they cut off, and had with them for the ceremony." Their Algonquin allies went off to celebrate by themselves. While the Algonquin women stripped naked except for their jewelry, preparing to dance, Tessouat, their sagamore, sat "between two poles, on which hung the scalps (*testes*) of their enemies."²⁰

¹⁹ Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, in Theodor de Bry, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae prouincia Gallis acciderunt* [= his *America*, Pt. II] (Frankfurt, 1519), pls. 15-16, in Paul Hulton, *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, a Huguenot Artist in France, Florida, and England*, 2 vols. (London, 1977). The Latin text and the engravings are reproduced in Hulton, *Work of Jacques Le Moyne*, II, pls. 107-108, a new English translation (revised in our quotation above), *ibid.*, I, 15-16, with commentary on p. 208. For the date of, and Le Moyne's presence on, the raids see *ibid.*, I, 6, 41. Le Moyne wrote and painted his recollections some 20 years after his experiences in Florida, and both he and Theodor de Bry, who engraved the pictures for publication after the artist's death, are known to have taken artistic liberties with ethnographic details in many pictures. Nevertheless, the verbal and pictorial representations of scalping agree in important details that most subsequent accounts designate as typical of Indian methods of scalping.

²⁰ H. P. Biggar, ed., *The Works of Samuel de Champlain . . .*, Publications of the Champlain Society (Toronto, 1922-1936), I, 102-103, 108.

The correctness of translating "*testes*" as "scalps" rather than "heads" becomes clear from Champlain's account of his famous battle in 1609 with the Iroquois at the side of his Montagnais, Huron, and Algonquin allies. When the fighting ended, the victors proceeded to torture an Iroquois prisoner. Among other indignities, wrote Champlain, "they flayed the top of his head (*escorcherent le haut de la teste*) and poured hot gum on his crown." When he was dead, they severed his head, arms, and legs, "reserving the skin of the head (*la peau de la teste*), which they had flayed, as they did with those of all the others they had killed in their attack." Upon returning to the St. Lawrence, Champlain was invited by the Montagnais to Tadoussac to see their victory ceremonies.

Approaching the shore each took a stick, on the end of which they hung the scalps (*testes*) of their slain enemies with some beads, singing . . . all together. And when all were ready, the women stripped themselves quite naked, and jumped into the water, swimming to the canoes to receive the scalps of their enemies which were at the end of long sticks in the bow of their canoes, in order later to hang them round their necks, as if they had been precious chains. And then they sang and danced. Some days afterwards they made me a present of one of these scalps as if it had been some very valuable thing, and of a pair of shields belonging to their enemies, for me to keep to show to the king. And to please them I promised to do so.²¹

At the same time Marc Lescarbot, a lawyer, was describing in markedly similar terms the scalping customs of the Micmac near Port Royal. "[O]f the dead they cut off the scalps [*têtes*] in as great number as they can find, and these are divided among the captains, but they leave the carcass, contenting themselves with the scalp [*peau*], which they dry, or tan, and make trophies with it in their cabins, taking therein their highest contentment. And when some solemn feast is held among them . . . they take them, and dance with them, hanging about their necks or their arms, or at their girdles, and for very rage they sometimes bite at them."²²

When the Récollet missionaries penetrated the Huron country, they, too, found elaborate customs associated with the practice of scalp-taking. In 1623-1624 Gabriel Sagard noted that after killing an enemy in combat, the Hurons "carry away the head [*teste*]; and if they are too much encumbered with these they are content to take the skin with its hair [*la peau avec sa chevelure*], which they call *Onontsira*, tan them, and put them away for

²¹ *Ibid.*, II, 102-103, 106.

²² Marc Lescarbot, *The History of New France*, ed. and trans. W. L. Grant, Publ. of Champlain Soc. (Toronto, 1907-1914), III, 271 (English), 449 (French). Grant also writes that Lescarbot's reprint of Cartier's passage about the Toudamans' scalps "proves that the habit of scalping was not, as has been asserted, introduced into North America by Europeans" (*ibid.*, II, 124, n. 2). He then refers the reader to Friederici's study.

trophies, and in time of war set them on the palisades or walls of their town fastened to the end of a long pole."²³ The Iroquois in New Netherland put scalps to similar use. When the Dutch surgeon of Fort Orange journeyed into Mohawk and Oneida country in the winter of 1634-1635, he saw atop a gate of the old Oneida castle on Oriskany Creek "three wooden images carved like men, and with them . . . three scalps [*locken*] fluttering in the wind, that they had taken from their foes as a token of the truth of their victory." On a smaller gate at the east side of the castle "a scalp [*lock*] was also hanging," no doubt to impress the visitors.²⁴

The Powhatans of Virginia felt a similar need in 1608. According to Captain John Smith, Powhatan launched a surprise attack on the Payankatank, "his neare neighbours and subjects," killing twenty-four men. When his warriors retired from the battle, they brought away "the long haire of the one side of their heades [the other being shaved] with the skinne cased off with shels or reeds." The prisoners and scalps were then presented to the chief, who "hanged on a line unto two trees . . . the lockes of haire with their skinnes. And thus he made ostentation of as great a triumph at Werowocomoco, shewing them to the English men that then came unto him at his appointment . . . suppos[ing] to halfe conquer them by this spectacle of his terrible crueltie."²⁵ The skeleton of an Englishman almost certainly killed in Opechancanough's 1622 attack on the Virginia settlements has recently been excavated. His badly fractured cranium is heavily scored in a manner strongly suggesting that he was scalped, probably with an English knife.²⁶

²³ Father Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. George M. Wrong, trans. H. H. Langton, Publ. of the Champlain Soc. (Toronto, 1939), 153 (English), 348 (French).

²⁴ "Narrative of a Journey into the Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635," in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664*, Original Narratives of Early American History (New York, 1909), 148. Only a few French traders preceded Van den Bogaert to the Iroquois, and they had no reason to teach their customers how to scalp. We are grateful to Charles Gehring of the New York State Library for a transcription of the original Dutch manuscript in the Henry Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., and for his help in tracking down other Dutch words and phrases for "scalp." He informs us that in the late 1680s the Dutch began to substitute *kruyn* ("crown" of the head, or "pate") for *lock(en)* (literally "lock[s]" of hair) and that the New York English, who frequently used Dutch interpreters, often mentioned "the crowns" of slain enemy warriors (personal communication, Dec. 22, 1975).

²⁵ John Smith, *A Map of Virginia . . .* (Oxford, 1612), in Philip L. Barbour, ed., *The Jamestown Voyages under the First Charter, 1606-1609* (Hakluyt Society, *Publications*, 2d Ser., CXXXVII [Cambridge, 1969]), II, 372.

²⁶ Ivor Noël Hume, "First Look at a Lost Virginia Settlement," *National Geographic*, CLV (1979), 735-767. With oral information and additional photographs, J. Lawrence Angel, the physical anthropologist who analyzed the skeleton, convinced us on June 1, 1979, of the likelihood of this interpretation.

The list of Europeans who found scalping among the eastern Indians in the earliest stages of contact could be extended almost indefinitely.²⁷ But the later descriptions only reiterate the themes of the earlier, while reinforcing them with the continuity of custom. The first characteristic these descriptions share is an expression of surprise at the discovery of such a novel practice. The nearly universal highlighting of scalping in the early literature, the search for intelligible comparisons (such as parchment), the detailed anatomical descriptions of the act itself, and the total absence of any suggestion of white precedence or familiarity with the practice all suggest that an eighteenth-century French soldier's remarks were not disingenuous. "It is shameful for the human race to use such barbarous methods," wrote J. C. B., who had fought beside Indian allies in the 1750s. "Yet, to tell the truth, the idea belongs only to the savages, who were using it before they heard of the civilized nations."²⁸ For if the men of several different, antagonistic nationalities, divided by religion, history, language, and imperial ambition, had introduced scalping to the Indians, they certainly had no need to cloak their deed in secrecy. Only twentieth-century intellectuals and Indian advocates have found scalping particularly symbolic of white "barbarism." By seventeenth-century standards, it was a rather tame form of corporal desecration. On the other hand, if the Europeans—*any* Europeans—did feel guilty about introducing it, then we are confronted with the implausible spectacle of a Caucasian conspiracy of silence and hypocrisy on a universal scale for more than three centuries. For no one before the nineteenth century ever leveled such an accusation at the whites, although many other European transgressions during the conquest of the Americas have repeatedly been advertised since the early sixteenth century.

The second theme of these descriptions is that the actual removal of an enemy's head-skin was firmly embedded among other customs that could hardly have been borrowed from the European traders and fishermen who preceded the earliest European authors. The elaborate preparation of the scalps by drying, stretching on hoops, painting, and decorating; special scalp yells when a scalp was taken and later when it was borne home on raised spears or poles; the scalplock as men's customary hairdress; scalp-taking as an important element in male status advancement; occasionally nude female custodianship of the prizes; scalp dances; scalps as body and clothing decorations; scalps as nonremunerative trophies of war to be pub-

²⁷ Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 8-37. Useful collections of later as well as early references are in Regina Flannery, *An Analysis of Coastal Algonquian Culture* (Washington, D.C., 1939), 124-125, and Nathaniel Knowles, "The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America," *American Philosophical Society, Proceedings*, LXXXII (1940), 151-225 (on scalps, pp. 194-217).

²⁸ Sylvester K. Stevens *et al.*, eds., *Travels in New France by J.C.B.* [1751-1761] (Harrisburg, Pa., 1941), 68.

licly displayed on canoes, cabins, and palisades; elaborate ceremonial treatment of scalps integrated into local religious beliefs; and the substitution of a scalp for a living captive to be adopted to replace a deceased member of the family—all these appear too varied, too ritualized, and too consistent with other native cultural traits over long periods of white contact to have been recent and foreign introductions by Europeans. While in most areas of the world enemy body parts of some kind have been taken as battle trophies, these usually consist of easily removable whole appendages, such as the head, fingers, or ears. But the scalp is a very specialized kind of trophy because it involves only a part of the skin of the head and therefore requires some skill to obtain. Moreover, although scalping was widely distributed in pre-Columbian North America (and also, less widely, in South America), the specific forms of the associated cultural traits varied markedly from tribe to tribe and area to area, as did their patterning within different cultures. This is not the case with other traits of Indian cultures that are of known European origins.

The final characteristic of the early accounts is an obvious stretching for adequate words to describe scalping to a European audience. The noun "scalp" (from a Scandinavian root) existed in English long before the seventeenth century. It had two meanings of different ages. The older meaning was "the top or crown of the head; the skull or cranium," and the more recent one was the skin covering that upper part of the head, "usually covered with hair." But in 1601, Holland's edition of Pliny added a third meaning from a literary acquaintance with the "Anthropophagi" (Scythians) near the North Pole, who wore their enemies' "scalpes haire and al, instead of mandellions or stomachers before their breasts."²⁹ Perhaps because few explorers were familiar with the Latin classics, the new meaning seems to have been ignored by English writers until 1675, when King Philip's War greatly increased the frequency of scalping. Until then, the best substitutes were compounds such as "hair-scalp" and "head-skin," descriptive phrases such as "the skin and hair of the scalp of the head," or the simple but ambiguous word "head."³⁰ Likewise, the only meaning of the verb "to scalp" derived from the Latin *scalpere*, "to carve, engrave, scrape, or scratch." Consequently, English writers were forced to use "skin," "flay," or "excoriate" until 1676, when "to scalp" or, colloquially, "to skulp" became popular.³¹

²⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Scalp"; Caius Plinius Secundus, *The historie of the world*, trans. Philemon Holland, 2d ed., I (London, 1614), 154.

³⁰ John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England . . .* (Boston, 1865 [orig. publ. London, 1675]), 114; [Nathaniel Saltonstall], *The Present State of New-England with Respect to the Indian War . . .* (London, 1675), in Charles H. Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, Orig. Narr. of Early Am. Hist. (New York, 1913), 30, 34; Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* [1674] (Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 1st Ser., I [1792]), 162, hereafter cited as Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians*.

³¹ *OED*, s.v. "Scalp"; [Saltonstall], *Present State of New-England*, in Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of Indian Wars*, 28-29; N[athaniel] S[altonstall], *A New and Further*

The French, too, resorted to circumlocutions to convey an idea of scalping. For the scalp itself they used *tête*, *peau*, *cheveux*, and *chevelure* in various combinations, and *couper*, *égorcher*, and *enlever* to indicate the mode of taking it. In 1769 a French account of Colonel Henry Bouquet's expedition against the Ohio Indians introduced the American words into the language.³² By the end of the eighteenth century, the Anglo-American words had been borrowed to fill the gaps in the Swedish, German, and Dutch lexicons as well.³³

The evidence of etymology strengthens the documentary argument for pre-Columbian scalping because the lack of precise and economical words to describe the practice indicates the lack of a concept of scalping, which in turn indicates the absence of the practice itself. European soldiers were guilty of countless barbarities in peace and war, but during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were never known to scalp their victims. Hanging, disemboweling, beheading, and drawing and quartering were commonplace in public executions or in war, but to our knowledge no observer ever described the taking of scalps. In the Elizabethan campaigns against the Irish, for example, where natives were portrayed in terms that mirror the descriptions of American natives a few years later, the English took only heads in an attempt to terrorize their "savage" opponents. Not without reason, the grim, pallid features of human faces lining the path to a commander's tent were chosen as a deterrent rather than impersonal shocks of hair and skin waving from tent poles and pikes.³⁴ Similarly,

Narrative of the State of New-England . . . (London, 1676), *ibid.*, 98-99; Josselyn, *Account of Two Voyages*, 114.

³² Paul Robert, *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris, 1953-1964), s.v. "Scalper"; Georg Friederici, *Amerikanistisches Wörterbuch* (Hamburg, 1947), s.v. "Scalp"; Karl König, *Überseeische Wörter im Französischen (16.-18. Jahrhundert)*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, 91 Heft (Halle, 1939), 188-189.

³³ *OED*, s.v. "Scalp" (verb); Philip Motley Palmer, *Neuweltwörter in Deutschen*, Germanische Bibliothek, 42 Band (Heidelberg, 1939), 124-125; *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* ('s Gravenhage and Leiden, 1882-), s.v. "Scalpeeren."

³⁴ See David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966); Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXX (1973), 575-598; and James Muldoon, "The Indian as Irishman," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, CXI (1975), 267-289, for lack of evidence of scalping. Quinn is "almost certain [scalping] was not practised in Europe, and certainly [it] was not in Ireland" (personal communication, Oct. 7, 1975). It hardly seems worth arguing whether European practices were more barbaric than Indian ones, if that is one aspect of the new mythology on scalping. European display of trophy heads lasted far beyond the 17th century; for example, Englishmen were photographed posing jauntily with the severed heads of Chinese "pirates" in Kowloon about 1900 (George Woodcock, *The British in the Far East* [New York, 1969], facing 29), and in 1931 the British in Burma displayed the heads of executed participants in Saya San's Peasant Rebellion (Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution* [New Haven, Conn., 1968], xv; John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1958], 316, n. 88).

when Captain Miles Standish wished to daunt the Massachusetts Indians who threatened the nascent Plymouth Colony, he killed Wituwamat, "the chiefest of them," took his head to Plymouth, and set it on the top of the fort with a blood-soaked flag.³⁵

On the other hand, the Indian languages of the East contain many specialized expressions referring to the scalp, the act of scalping, and the victim of scalping. Some of these words were recorded quite early by European observers such as Gabriel Sagard.³⁶ Later vocabularies and dictionaries consistently show well-developed terminology of this topic,³⁷ implying considerable antiquity for scalping. In the Creek language one word for "scalp" was a compound meaning literally "human head-skin," which could be shortened to simply "head-skin"; both dialects of the related Hitchiti-Mikasuki language had the exact equivalent of "head-skin" as their word for "scalp." But Creek also had another, unanalyzable, and probably older name for the scalp trophy (which by the late nineteenth century had also taken on the meanings "mane of a horse, lock of hair," and—with the addition of a morpheme meaning "woven"—"wig").³⁸ This

American soldiers in Vietnam within the last decade sometimes took and kept ears as trophies (some were confiscated by army authorities and sent to the Smithsonian for forensic identification by physical anthropologists). These and other recent examples suggest racism as an element in barbarity.

³⁵ Sydney V. James, Jr., ed., *Three Visitors to Early Plymouth: Letters about the Pilgrim Settlement in New England during Its First Seven Years . . .* (Plymouth Plantation, 1963), 31.

³⁶ Gabriel Sagard, *Dictionnaire de la langue huronne* (Paris, 1632), s.v. "Membres & parties du corps humain"; "Narrative of a Journey," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland*, 158; Jacques Bruyas, *Radices verborum Iroquaeorum*, [John Gilmary Shea's] Library of American Linguistics, X (New York, 1862).

³⁷ Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Notes on the Iroquois . . .* (Albany, N.Y., 1847), 393; [David] Zeisberger's *Indian Dictionary*, ed. Eben Norton Horsford (Cambridge, Mass., 1887); Bishop [Friedrich] Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language . . .* (Montreal, 1878-1880), I, *English-Otchipwe*, 221, 231, II, *Otchipwe-English*, 79, 346; Sebastian Rasles [Sébastien Râle], *A Dictionary of the Abnaki Language*, ed. John Pickering, *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, N.S., I (1833), 412; George Lemoine, *Dictionnaire Français-Algonquin* (Quebec, 1911); Montague Chamberlain, *Maliseet Vocabulary* (Cambridge, Mass., 1899); Rev. Silas Tertius Rand, *Dictionary of the Language of the Micmac Indians* (Halifax, N.S., 1888); Lemoine, *Dictionnaire Français-Montagnais* (Boston, 1901); Cyrus Byington, *A Dictionary of the Choctaw Language*, ed. John R. Swanton and Henry S. Halbert, *Smithsonian Inst., Bur. of Am. Ethnol., Bull.* 46 (Washington, D.C., 1915). A more thorough search would undoubtedly uncover many more examples.

³⁸ Albert S. Gatschet, *A Migration Legend of the Creek Indians . . .* (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1884-1888), I, 223, II, 12 (l. 4), 48, 91; Mary R. Haas, "Creek Vocabulary," MS, ca. 1940, in Sturtevant's possession; R. M. Loughridge and David M. Hodge, *English and Muskokee Dictionary . . .* (Philadelphia, 1914 [orig. publ. St. Louis, 1890]). For Hitchiti, see Gatschet, *Migration Legend*, II, 22 (l. 13); for Mikasuki, Sturtevant, 1950-1952, MS field notes.

unanalyzable form is not known to have been borrowed from another language, so the concept it labelled was probably ancient among the Creeks. The Iroquoian languages, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, each had for the meaning of "scalp" a simple root (cognate in these languages), not further analyzable, and Oneida had another but partially similar unanalyzable root in the same meaning. These were used in various verbs grammatically identical in each of these languages (all five commonly used a verb referring to "lifting" the scalp, which may be the source, by loan translation, for English "to lift hair" and French *enlever la chevelure*).³⁹ In the Iroquoian languages, as also in those of the Algonquian family, specialized vocabularies are usually built by compounding ordinary roots and through complex systems of affixes, rather than by the borrowing that is common in European languages. Thus the existence of cognate unanalyzable roots in these languages is especially strong evidence for the antiquity of the associated meaning. The scalping terminology of the Algonquian languages is often extensive and precise, usually involving roots referring to the head or hair but occasionally including incompletely analyzable expressions. Thus, for example, Ojibwa distinguishes between "scalp" and "Sioux scalp"; Eastern Abenaki has a terminological distinction between an enemy scalp that has already been taken and one that is being taken or could be taken; the Fox equivalents for "he scalps him," "he scalps him (that is, his already-severed head)," and "he scalps it (that is, a severed head)" are not fully transparent in terms of Fox grammar; and the Munsee-Delaware word for "scalp" means literally "skin head" not "head skin" (this last supporting Friederici's hypothesis that scalp trophies developed from head trophies).⁴⁰

Words have done the most to fix the image of pre-contact Indian scalping on the American historical record, but contemporary paintings, drawings, and engravings substantially reinforce those images. The single most important picture in this regard is Theodore de Bry's engraving of Le Moyne's drawing of "Treatment of the Enemy Dead by Outina's

³⁹ Floyd G. Lounsbury, personal communications, June 3, 7, 1979, citing for Oneida, Cayuga, and Onondaga his own MS field notes; for Onondaga, MS field notes by Alexander Goldenweiser and William N. Fenton; for Seneca, Wallace L. Chafe, *Seneca Morphology and Dictionary*, Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, IV (Washington, D.C., 1967), entry 1218; and for Mohawk, Bruyas, *Radices*, 82.

⁴⁰ Ives Goddard, personal communication, May 30, 1979, citing for Ojibwa, Baraga, *Dictionary of the Otchipwe*; for Eastern Abenaki, [Râle], *Dictionary of the Abnaki Language*, ed. Pickering; for Fox, William Jones, *Fox Texts* (American Ethnological Society, *Publications*, I [Leyden, 1907]), 188 (ll. 22-23), 190 (l. 5), 218 (ll. 16-17), as well as Truman Michelson, "The Traditional Origin of the Fox Society Known as 'The Singing Around Rite,'" *Fortieth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology . . . 1918-1919* (Washington, D.C., 1925), 541-615 (p. 602, l. 4), and Michelson, *Contributions to Fox Ethnology*, Smithsonian Inst., Bur. of Am. Ethnol., Bull. 85 (Washington, D.C., 1927), 84 (ll. 11-12); and for Munsee, his own MS field notes.

Forces."⁴¹ Based on Le Moyne's observations in 1564, the 1591 engraving was the first public representation of Indian scalping, one faithful to Le Moyne's verbal description and to subsequent accounts from other regions of eastern America. The details of using sharp reeds to remove the scalp, then drying the green skin over a fire, displaying the trophies on long poles, and later celebrating the victory with established rituals by the native priest lend authenticity to de Bry's rendering and credence to the argument for Indian priority of invention.

Later illustrations are less graphic, but they continue to emphasize the use of scalps as trophies. A fine depiction in a French drawing of 1666 shows two Iroquois warriors conducting an Indian captive, all three wearing scalp locks, one carrying a pole with two circular scalps on one end, of which one with a scalplock is specified as from a male enemy and one without is said to be female.⁴² About 1700 a French artist sketched an Iroquois cabin decorated with the scalps ("*testes*," but clearly drawn as scalps, not heads) of two enemies its owner had killed.⁴³ In Louisiana between 1732 and 1735 the French artist De Batz painted two Choctaw warriors displaying five scalps ("*chevelures*"), with the stretched skin painted red, hung on long poles.⁴⁴ While not all of these depictions were made in the earliest period of contact, they do portray a striking similarity between the scalping customs and uses of several different and distant Indian groups, thereby diminishing the likelihood that they were imposed or introduced by white foreigners.

Drawings also reveal another kind of evidence for Indian priority, namely scalplocks. A small braid or lock of hair on the crown, often decorated with paint or jewelry, the scalplock was worn widely in both eastern and western America. Contrary to the notion of scalping as a recent and mercenary introduction, the scalplock possessed ancient religious meaning in most tribes.

In some of the rituals used when the hair was first gathered up and cut from the crown of a boy's head the teaching was set forth that this lock represented the life of the child, now placed wholly in the control of the mysterious and supernatural power that alone could will his death. The braided lock worn thereafter was a sign of this dedica-

⁴¹ Hulton, *Work of Jacques Le Moyne*, pl. 107.

⁴² Reproduced in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Northeast*, in William C. Sturtevant, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, XV (Washington, D.C., 1978), 299.

⁴³ *Les raretés des Indes, Codex Canadiensis* (Paris, 1930), original in Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, Okla., attributed, probably wrongly, to Charles Bécard de Granville; reproduced in Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., ed., *The American Heritage Book of Indians* (New York, 1961), 190-191.

⁴⁴ A. De Batz, watercolor in Bushnell Collection, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, reproduced and described in David I. Bushnell, Jr., *Drawings by A. De Batz in Louisiana, 1732-1735 . . .* (Washington, D.C., 1927), 11-12, pl. 5; similar scalps are carried by a Tunica warrior in the same collection, pl. 2.

tion and belief, and represented the man's life. On it he wore the ornaments that marked his achievements and honors, and for anyone to touch lightly this lock was regarded as a grave insult.⁴⁵

If the whites had taught the Indians to scalp one another for money, there is little reason to believe that they were also cozened into making it easier for their enemies by growing partible and portable locks. Something far deeper in native culture and history must account for the practice.

One kind of evidence unavailable to Friederici that alone establishes the existence of scalping in pre-Columbian America is archaeological. If Indian skulls of the requisite age can be found showing unambiguous marks of scalping, then the new wisdom of scalping must be discarded. A wealth of evidence, particularly from prehistoric sites along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, now seems to indicate just such a conclusion. There are two basic kinds of archaeological evidence of scalping. The first is circular or successive cuts or scratches on the skull vaults of victims who had been previously killed. These cuts are, of course, subject to various interpretations, given the existence of post-mortem mutilation in many cultural areas. The trophy skulls found in several Hopewellian burials, for example, frequently exhibit superficial cuts and scratches, apparently made by flint knives in the process of removing the flesh. But there are many examples with cut marks only where they would be caused by customary techniques of scalping.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians*, s.v. "Hair dressing" by Alice C. Fletcher, and "Scalping" by M[oooney]; Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 104-106, 127-128; Friederici, "Scalping in America," 425, 437. Several scalplocks may be seen on the Indian scalps displayed at the Museum of the American Indian in New York City, an excellent exhibit that emphasizes their nonmercenary nature as war trophies. It also contains a rare scalp of a black man. In 1906 Friederici had found only two literary references to the scalping of blacks by the eastern Indians (*Skalpieren*, 106; "Scalping in America," 438). One of the scalplocks paid for by Pennsylvania during the Revolution found its way into Pierre-Eugène du Simitière's "American Museum" in Philadelphia. His accession list under July 1782 records "a Scalp taken from an Indian killed in September, 1781, in Washington County near the Ohio in this State by Adam Poe, who fought with two Indians, and at last kill'd them both, it has an ornament a white wampum bead a finger long with a Silver Knob at the end the rest of the hair plaited and tyed with deer skin. Sent me by the President and the Supreme executive Council of this state with a written account of the affair" (quoted in Henry J. Young, "A Note on Scalp Bounties in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History*, XXIV [1957], 217).

⁴⁶ Charles C. Willoughby, *The Turner Group of Earthworks, Hamilton County, Ohio* (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), 61; Georg K. Neumann, "Evidence for the Antiquity of Scalping from Central Illinois," *American Antiquity*, V (1940), 287-289; Wilda Anderson Obey, "The Arvilla People," *Minnesota Archaeologist*, XXXIII, Nos. 3 and 4 (1974), 1-33. N. S. Ossenberg, "Skeletal Remains from Hungry Hall Mound 2," MS (1964), Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada, Table 1, 21; Walter Raymond Wood, *Na'za, The Ponca Fort* (Madison, Wis., 1960), 86-87;

The second kind of evidence, though not as abundant, is even more conclusive. In a number of prehistoric sites, lesions have been found on the skulls of victims who survived scalping long enough to allow the bone tissue partially to regenerate. Contrary to popular belief, scalping was not necessarily a fatal operation; the historical record is full of survivors.⁴⁷ Scalping is the most plausible, if not the only possible, explanation for these lesions that appear exactly where literary and pictorial descriptions indicate the scalp was traditionally cut.⁴⁸

Although the moral fire of the new wisdom of scalping misses the mark, there are two moral issues to be considered in the European use of scalp

Donald E. Wray, "The Kingston Lake Sequence," MS (n.d.), Illinois State Museum, Springfield; Lucile E. Hoyme and William M. Bass, *Human Skeletal Remains from the Tollifero (Ha6) and Clarksville (Mc14) Sites, John H. Kerr Reservoir Basin, Virginia*, Smithsonian Inst., Bur. of Am. Ethnol., Bull. 182 (Washington, D.C., 1962), 378-380, pls. 102-104.

⁴⁷ Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 107-108, collected references to 48 scalping survivors, 33 white and 15 Indian. Among many additional documented instances are the following: Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians*, 162; Samuel Penhallow, *The History of the Wars of New-England with the Eastern Indians . . .* (Boston, 1726), 72; [Andrew M. Welch, M.D.], *A Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of Mrs. Jane Johns, who was Barbarously Wounded and Scalped by Seminole Indians, in East Florida* (Baltimore, 1837); J. H. Trumbull and C. J. Hoadly, eds., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut . . .* (Hartford, 1850-1890), V, 26; S[altonstall], *A New and Further Narrative*, in Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of Indian Wars*, 99; A. W. Putnam, *History of Middle Tennessee or, Life and Times of Gen. James Robertson* (Nashville, 1859), 128, 153-154, 294, 355. The human capacity to survive scalping and primitive medical treatment is exemplified in James Robertson, "Remarks on the Management of the Scalped-Head," *Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal*, II, No. 2 (1805-1806), 27-30, who advocated boring the exposed skull in numerous places with an awl to allow new flesh to generate. About 1940 Ángel Palerm, a curious young foreign visitor to two small isolated settlements on the northwest Mexican frontier, was shown three elderly people who had survived scalping. Each had a circular area of scar tissue at the apex of the head. Two claimed they had been captured by Apaches about 1900 and one by Yaquis some time between 1900 and 1910. They said that after they had been captured, the Indians removed their scalps to turn in for scalp bounties, and then cured their wounds with native herbal remedies in order to keep them alive for other purposes (Palerm, personal communication, May 17, 1976).

⁴⁸ Charles Snow, "Possible Evidence of Scalping at Moundville," *Alabama Museum of Natural History*, Paper No. 15, Pt. II (1941), figs. 9-10; H. Hamperl and W. S. Laughlin, "Osteological Consequences of Scalping," *Human Biology*, XXXI (1959), 80-89; Ossenberg, "Skeletal Remains from Hungry Hall Mound 2," MS; and personal communications from William S. Laughlin, Apr. 22, 1975; T. D. Stewart, Feb. 25, 1975; Ray Baby (telephone), May 2, 1975; and Donald Lenig, Oct. 11, 1975. An excellent study which confirms our conclusions is Douglas W. Owsley and Hugh E. Berryman, "Ethnographic and Archaeological Evidence of Scalping in the Southeastern United States," *Tennessee Archaeologist*, XXXI (Spring, 1975), 41-58.

bounties. The first is that the bounties did encourage the spread of scalping to tribes that were unfamiliar with the practice or that used it sparingly in non-mercenary ways.⁴⁹ Once the Indians had been drawn into the European web of trade, the purchasing power to be gained by killing Indians hostile to the economic and political interests of European suppliers could not be rejected lightly. Friederici's study properly emphasized the post-European spread and intensification of scalping by Indians; secondary references to his work may have influenced the recent popularity of the notion that the practice everywhere originated with Europeans. However, scalping was in fact present in pre-Columbian times in some of the areas where Friederici thought its introduction was due to direct or indirect European influence.

In one sense, scalping was an "improvement" on the traditional treatment of enemies by many Indian groups, "it being the custome" of the southern New England tribes, wrote William Wood, "to cut off their [foes'] heads, hands, and feete, to beare home to their wives and children, as true tokens of their renowned victorie."⁵⁰ In his *Key into the Language of America* Roger Williams translated the Narragansett word *Timequassin* for "to cut off, or behead," observing that "when ever they wound, and their arrow sticks in the body of their enemie they (if they be valourous and possibly may) they follow their arrow, and falling upon the person wounded and tearing his head a little aside by his Locke, they in the twinkling of an eye fetch off his head though but with a sorry [dull] knife."⁵¹ Scalping seems to have been reserved for enemies slain a considerable distance from home, "which is their usual manner, when it is too far to carry the heads."⁵² As soon as the battle was ended, the Indians made a fire to "carefully preserve the scalps of the head, drying the inside with hot ashes; and so carry them home as trophies of their valour, for which they are rewarded" with praise and renown.⁵³ It was a similar need for proof

⁴⁹ Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 45-50; and "Scalping in America," 432-436; Young, "Note on Scalp Bounties," *Pa. Hist.*, XXIV (1957), 207.

⁵⁰ William Wood, *New Englands Prospect* . . . (London, 1634), 84.

⁵¹ Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* . . . (London, 1643), 50-51.

⁵² William Hubbard, *The Present State of New England* . . . (London, 1677), 63 (2d pagination). In the Pequot War of 1637, for example, Indian allies were encouraged by the English at Hartford to take Pequot heads as proof of their friendship, as was the prevailing native custom. But when the Indians sent trophies from a much greater distance to Boston, they often sent scalps in lieu of the more cumbersome heads and hands. As late as the 1780s and 1790s the Cherokees and other tribes were taking both heads and scalps on the Tennessee frontier, which adds strength to Friederici's hypothesis that scalping was a logical and historical development from head-taking (James Kendall Hosmer, ed., *Winthrop's Journal "History of New England,"* 1630-1649, Orig. Narr. of Early Am. Hist., I [New York, 1908], 189, 219, 229-231; Putnam, *History of Middle Tennessee*, 107-108, 113, 355; Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 15-17, and "Scalping in America," 425).

⁵³ Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians*, 162.

that prompted the Europeans to encourage the taking of scalps, a practice that at least allowed the victims occasionally to survive.

The second and more important moral issue raised by the scalp bounties is not that Europeans taught the Indians how to scalp—they already knew how—but that Europeans adopted the Indian practice of scalping even though their cultures offered no moral or religious warrant for it and the traditional standards of Christian behavior condemned it. The earliest bounties were offered to encourage friendly Indians to kill Indians hostile to the interests of the European governments, the accepted proof being heads.⁵⁴ At this stage, the colonists were guilty only of perpetuating a sanguinary Indian tradition.

When the New England settlements had their backs to the wall in King Philip's War, however, it was felt necessary to give the English soldiers a mercenary incentive to pursue the mobile Indian forces. So, in addition to offering their Indian allies ten shillings worth of truck cloth, the governments of Connecticut and Massachusetts offered their own men thirty shillings for every enemy "Head." As Colonel Benjamin Church, Philip's final nemesis, remarked, "Methinks it's scanty reward and poor encouragement; though it was better than what had been some time before." The legendary Hannah Dustin had few grounds for complaint when the Massachusetts General Court awarded her £50 for the scalps of two Indian men, two women, and six children.⁵⁵

While the English took and maintained the lead in promoting the white scalping of Indians, to the French goes the distinction of having first encouraged the Indian scalping of whites. In 1688 the governor of Canada offered ten beaver skins to the Indians of northern New England for every enemy scalp, Christian or Indian. Not to be outdone, the English regained the palm in 1696 when the New York Council "*Resolved for the future, that Six pounds shall be given to each Christian or Indian as a Reward who shall kill a french man or indian Enemy.*"⁵⁶

⁵⁴ In 1637 the English in Connecticut paid their Mohegan allies for Pequot heads, and in 1641 the Dutch in New Amsterdam paid 10 fathoms of wampum for each Raritan head brought in (Charles Orr, ed., *History of the Pequot War . . .* [Cleveland, 1897], 138; E. B. O'Callaghan, comp., *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674* [Albany, N.Y., 1868], 28-29). With the onset of King Philip's War, the Narragansetts were offered one "Coat (that is, two Yards of Trucking Cloth, worth five Shillings per Yard here)" for every enemy "Head-Skin," but two coats for live prisoners. Apparently cloth was no object, for in two weeks they returned to collect their reward for "Eighteen Heads" alone (S[altonstall], *Present State of New England*, in Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of Indian Wars*, 34). William Hubbard's semi-official version of the treaty said merely "Head," not "Head-Skin" (*Present State of New England*, 22).

⁵⁵ Hubbard, *Present State of New England*, 22; Benjamin Church, *Diary of King Philip's War, 1675-76*, ed. Alan and Mary Simpson (Chester, Conn., 1975), 156; Cotton Mather, *Decennium Luctuosum* (1699), in Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of Indian Wars*, 266.

⁵⁶ E. B. O'Callaghan and Berthold Fernow, eds., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York . . .* (Albany, 1856-1887), III, 562, IV, 150n.

But something was gnawing at the English conscience. The first Massachusetts act of 1694 to encourage volunteers against the Indians offered bounties "for every [hostile] Indian, great or small, which they shall kill, or take and bring in prisoner." In 1704 the act was renewed, but the General Court amended it in the direction of "Christian practice." Instead of rewarding equally the killing of every Indian, a scale graduated by age and sex was established, so that scalps of "men or youths capable of bearing armes" were worth £100; women and children ten years and above, only £10; and no reward was given for killing children under ten years. In a gesture of dubious compassion, such children instead were sold as slaves and transported out of the country.⁵⁷

While some colonists were concerned about the effects of the bounties on Indian lives, others worried about the effects on their own countrymen. As chairman of a committee on volunteers during the 1712 session of the Massachusetts General Court, Samuel Sewall tried to prevent the bounty-hunters from turning their bloody work into a "Trade" at the expense of the government. Forced to give in to frontier pressure for "12s 6d Wages [a week] and Subsistence" for the volunteers in addition to the scalp bounty, he tried to degrade the volunteers' special status by ensuring that "stand[ing] forces, Marching and in Garrison might have the same Encouragement as to Scalp Money," which at that time stood at £100. All the talk of mercenary warfare clearly made the judge uneasy, and he concluded that "if persons would not be spirited by love of their wives, Children, Parents, [and] Religion, twas a bad Omen."⁵⁸

Some years later in Pennsylvania, the Reverend Thomas Barton was nagged by a similar concern. In 1763 the former military chaplain wrote that "the general cry and wish is for what they call a Scalp Act. . . . Vast numbers of Young Fellows who would not chuse to enlist as Soldiers, would be prompted by Revenge, Duty, Ambition & the Prospect of the Reward, to carry Fire & Sword into the Heart of the Indian Country. And indeed, if this Method could be reconcil'd with *Revelation* and the *Humanity* of the English Nation, it is the only one that appears likely to put a final stop to those Barbarians."⁵⁹

Unfortunately, clerics less scrupulous than Barton were ready to bend "Revelation" to fit the needs of the day. The famous ambush of Captain John Lovewell's volunteer band at Pigwacket (Fryeburg), Maine, on a Sabbath morning in May 1725 was launched as Jonathan Frye, the expedition's young Harvard-trained chaplain, had finished scalping a lone Indian hunter. In the heat of the day-long fight that ensued, Frye scalped another fallen adversary before he was himself wounded and left to die.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁷ *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay* . . . (Boston, 1869-1922), I, 530, 558, 594, II, 259.

⁵⁸ M. Halsey Thomas, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*, II (New York, 1973), 691 (June 13, 1712).

⁵⁹ Quoted in Carl Van Doren and Julian P. Boyd, eds., *Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1736-1762* (Philadelphia, 1938), lxxii-lxxiii.

⁶⁰ Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates; Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College* . . . (Cambridge, Mass., 1873-), VII, 176-177.

Reverend Thomas Smith of Falmouth (Portland) took no such personal risk. Rather, he was one of a group of gentlemen who hired a squad of hardy parishioners to go on a "Scout or Cruse for the killing and captivat-ing of the Indian enemy." In return for supplying the bounty-hunters with "Ammunition and Provision," the investors received "one full third Part of fourteen fifteenths of the Province Bounty for every Captive or Scalp, and of every Thing else they shall or may recover or obtain." In his journal for June 18, 1757, the minister recorded, "along with pious thoughts, 'I receive 165 pounds 3-3. . . . my part of scalp money.'"⁶¹

When ministers not only looked the other way but shared in the profits from Indian deaths, the moral barometer of America dipped dangerously low. At the bottom, however, lay the American Revolution, in which Englishmen scalped Englishmen in the name of liberty.⁶² Scalping and other techniques of Indian warfare, placed in the hands of a larger European population, eventually sealed the Indians' fate in North America, but not before wreaking upon the white man a subtle form of moral vengeance.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 407-408.

⁶² Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, eds., *Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View* (Stanford, Calif., 1961), 120, 133; Friederici, "Scalping in America," 433-435; Friederici, *Skalpieren*, 53-55.