Domesticating the Country:

Indigenous Power and Colonialism in the Black Swamp of the Old Northwest

BY

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DISSERTATION

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To Jen, for making a small part of this world home, and for everything else.

PREFACE

This study narrates a history of the Indigenous inhabitants of the Black Swamp region, a nearly 2,000 square-mile wetland made up of prairies, marshes, and swamp forests located mainly between the Maumee and Sandusky rivers in the southwestern Lake Erie basin.[1] Occupying most of what is today Northwest Ohio and a notch of Northeast Indiana, the Black Swamp helped shape the region's human history. For thousands of years, diverse Native communities established and maintained villages at the wetland edges. These peoples developed intimate relationships with the ecosystem and benefitted from the sustenance and protection it provided. After warfare during the second half of the seventeenth century all but removed the human presence from the lands between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, Indigenous bands resettled the Ohio Country in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

The newly established communities, some of which had historical connections to the region, took advantage of seasonal abundance provided by the fertile river valleys, dense forests, expansive wetlands, and tallgrass prairies. The Odawas, Wyandots, and Miamis who settled along the edges of the one-million-acre Black Swamp in the mid-eighteenth century lived in the most biodiverse, nutritionally beneficent bioregion in the Ohio Country. Relying on the wetland's profusion of large game and fur-bearing rodents, rich agricultural lands at the swamp's edges, seasonal fishing, and reliable forage in the ancient hardwood forests, Indigenous migrants fashioned a culturally diverse homeland in the western Erie basin.

[1] Biologists have estimated that the Black Swamp covered anywhere from approximately 400,000 to one million hectares (between about one million and 2.45 million acres or 1,500 and 3,800 square miles). I opt to describe the area as slightly larger than the likely accurate minimum in order to include the oak openings region north of the lower Maumee River. See William J. Mitsch, "Solving Lake Erie's harmful algal blooms by restoring the Great Black Swamp in Ohio," *Ecological Engineering* 108, Part B (November 2017), 406-407.

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The food, furs, and protection provided by the Black Swamp and surrounding environs enabled Native communities to successfully repel imperial incursions by British and American forces between the 1760s and 1790s. An increasingly coordinated coalition of Black Swamp and Ohio Valley peoples struggled against the United States' claims of sovereignty for nearly two decades after the beginning of the American Revolution. Eventually, however, these efforts failed. No spectacular military defeat marked the decline of Indigenous power in the Ohio Country. The Battle of Fallen Timbers on the lower Maumee River in August 1794 saw the capitulation of the multitribal Western Indian Confederacy after only a brief clash. After witnessing the destructive power of a successful invasion force, Native leaders sought to broker a peace and preserve their communities and lifeways. While the fighting at Fallen Timbers was brief and the loss of life minimal, the Ohio River boundary between the Great Lakes Indian Country and the growing Anglo-American settlements to the east and south began to dissolve after the Treaty of Greenville the following year.

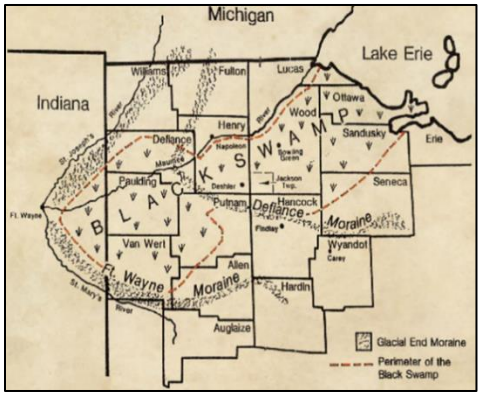

Figure 1: The Black Swamp as it existed until the late 1800s

and ‘90s. These factors all compounded the effects of Fallen Timbers and contributed to the disintegration of the Ohio River boundary between Indian Country and Anglo-American backcountry settlements.

Fallen Timbers and Greenville may have heralded the destruction of an Indigenous political and socioecological landscape in the upper Ohio Valley north and west of the river, but farther to the north the Black Swamp would remain the heart of a large refuge for Native communities for the next two decades as well as a buffer against settler incursions and a reliable source of sustenance for an additional 20 years after that. The dense forests and impassable swamps simultaneously limited American settlement and encouraged Indian communities to cluster their villages close to the wetland edges so that they might take advantage of the cornucopia of food and furs. In fact, the boundary line brokered by the Treaty of Greenville cordoned off the Northwest section of what would become Ohio and created a vast reservation precisely because Lake Erie basin and Ohio Valley peoples had already intentionally settled around the great wetland during the previous decades. Indeed, the Black Swamp and the region’s Indigenous villages thrived symbiotically. This is not to say that Native peoples lived in some fictive “harmony” with “nature.” Rather, they domesticated the landscape in ways that suited their subsistence needs, cultural practices, and beliefs. The niches they constructed altered local ecosystems and allowed communities to reliably survive through seasons of abundance and scarcity over several generations. And the presence of semi-sedentary Indians willing to fight

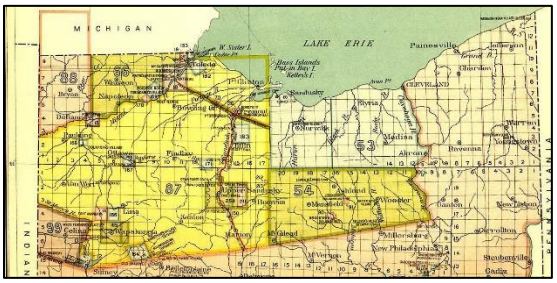

Figure 2: The Greenville Treaty Line (1795) along with the smaller Indian Reservations established after the Treaty of Fort Meigs (1817). Image from Charles Royce, *Bureau of American Ethnology Eighteenth Annual Report, pt. 2*, plate 49. Note that the land encompassed by the reserve is the region dominated by the Black Swamp.

and negotiate for their land and lifeways also ensured the continued existence of the Black Swamp.

This study presents the opening chapters of a longer project exploring the socioecological history of one unique bioregion from deep history to the present. I conclude the dissertation at the historical moment in which American conquest appeared assured. Yet, if we are to seriously consider this history from the position of the Native communities looking east from the Black Swamp, then military conquest seems less a threat than the steady erosion of Indigenous subsistence practices, community viability, and forms of political power. In other words, the threat of annihilation appeared as encroaching American farmsteads, the decimation of game populations, the razing of villages and burning of fields, the application of European law to Indigenous lives, and the insistence of legal property transfers by military leaders and diplomats as a condition of battlefield defeats and treaty negotiations. Ultimately, Euro-American efforts to claim the lands and productive energies of Indian communities in the Ohio Country profoundly affected those communities and created the conditions of possibility for Indigenous dispossession and rapid ecological transformation in the generations to come.

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Like all research projects, this one has depended upon the kindness, encouragement, inspiration, and support of innumerable people, institutions, and other-than-human actants. My relationships with family members, friends, colleagues, mentors, books, archival materials, microbes, plants, minerals, nonhuman animals, landscapes, technological assemblages, and a host of other things enabled “me” to bring this dissertation into existence. I might just as easily have produced a different project or none at all. Such is the exciting, frightening uncertainty of any research and, indeed, of life itself. So, before I properly acknowledge many of those

collaborators who have directly nurtured and guided my work over the years, I want to first describe how this project—a history of the Indigenous communities living near an expansive wetland before and during an era of colonial encroachment—crystalized around a set of seemingly tangential analytical and political concerns.

I spent much of the summer of 2014 desperately casting about for a suitable dissertation topic while my wife, Jen, and I giddily awaited the birth of our first child in late August. My first few years of graduate school had been devoted to the study of twentieth-century urban environmental history, but in late 2012, with the encouragement of my intellectually adventurous mentors, Corey Capers, Jeff Sklansky, and Robert Johnston, I returned to my rural roots and began exploring the development of input-intensive agriculture in the United States. Recalling childhood stories of the Black Swamp, an imposing forested wetland that had been drained in the late nineteenth century not far from where I grew up, I briefly considered writing a regional agroecological history of the enormous, seemingly uncoordinated reclamation efforts. Because this former wetland remains one of the most productive farming regions in the United States, I reasoned that an assessment of the environmental effects of the massive drainage project might illuminate something about the material politics and logics of an important early period in the industrialization of American agriculture. I worried, however, that the topic might prove too mundane or provincial. What compelling story could I possibly tell about the Black Swamp? The wetland was there and then, eventually, it was gone—just another environmental declension narrative. Even a study of the creation of the region's hybrid landscape—a latticework of subterranean field tiles and open ditches that can be defined as neither "natural" nor "unnatural"—would be unlikely to cover new analytical ground. What could I say that a

generation of scholars hadn't already?[2] Moreover, when confronted with the cascading horrors of anthropogenic climate change, I could not escape the feeling that there were more pressing stories to tell. Considering the grim IPCC reports, didn't global warming, the burning of fossil fuels, and contemporary struggles for environmental justice in Indigenous lands, poor neighborhoods, and communities of color supersede more prosaic environmentally themed topics? I was especially interested in exploring how environments help to shape social relations, particularly the dynamics of warfare, cultural exchange, and colonial or neocolonial acts of dispossession and political marginalization. Indecision and handwringing still plagued me as

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[2] On historical narratives, especially regarding environmental change, see William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1347-1376. On the ethics of storytelling practices in the environmental humanities, see Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

Environmental historians have engaged in recurrent debates over whether we should develop a coherent, ethically grounded master narrative highlighting human-caused ecosystem *destruction* or narratives that dwell instead on the development of hybrid relationships and landscapes that are simultaneously human and nonhuman, natural and artifactual. The contours of these positions are eloquently outlined in two important *Journal of American History* roundtables spanning two generations of scholarship. Donald Worster and, later, his former students Paul Sutter and Mark Hersey have passionately argued for a materialist focus on human-induced ecological transformation informed by contemporary scientific understandings. William Cronon, Richard White, Linda Nash, Gregg Mitman, and others emphasize the historical construction and inherent instability of categories like "nature" or "the environment" and the ways in which humankind and the nonhuman world entangle. Like most environmental historians living through the dangerous years of the early twenty-first century, I am influenced by both sides of this debate. Readers will note that despite the dramatic growth of the field, the roundtable reveals that the debate remained largely unchanged over a quarter of a century. During the watershed years of 2017, 2018, and 2019, we have witnessed an alarming uptick in the effects of anthropogenic climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem destruction, and extreme weather events. And 2020 has provided us with a dramatic example of the inseparability of "nature" and "society" in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. These unfolding crises underscore the fragility of both human life and the social systems we in the so-called global North have long taken for granted. How might these contemporary upheavals alter environmental history's disciplinary conversation? The neo-materialist synthesis developed by Timothy LeCain suggests that attention to hybrid agencies and entanglements need not blunt the ethical impact of our narratives. Indeed, the vulnerabilities we now experience suggest that a humanist ethic of compassion, modesty, and attentiveness to our entanglement with practices and institutions that are simultaneously oppressive and liberating, destructive and generative, might be just what we need to proceed efficaciously and productively. See Donald Worster, et al., "A Round Table: Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1087-1147; Paul Sutter, et al., "State of the Field: American Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 1 (June 2013): 94-148; and Timothy J. LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For examples of the ways in which analyses of complex human-nonhuman entanglements can deliver urgent, morally inflected arguments, see, for example, Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso, 2011); and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

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August arrived. I was ready to discard the wetland-focused project entirely when a Microcystis bloom in Lake Erie pulled me headfirst into the murky history of the Black Swamp.

On August 3, 2014, news broke that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and local health officials were placing residents of Toledo under a “do not drink” advisory. The previous night chemists had detected the toxin microcystin (produced by Microcystis and other cyanobacteria during cell death) near the Lake Erie intake of the city’s largest water treatment facility. Over the next two days, nearly half a million people in metropolitan Toledo were without water as the liver-damaging toxin floated around the mouth of the Maumee River. Ohio’s governor declared a state of emergency. Bottled water quickly sold out of area stores. Residents queued up in front of fire stations as the Ohio National Guard trucked in 33,000 gallons of water. Some people drove outside the region to make their own purchases and avoid the lines. Mercifully, by August 5 the microcystin readings returned to safe levels (less than one part per billion), and the EPA and city lifted the water ban.

Figure 3: Microcystis bloom, August 3, 2014, NASA satellite image.

As I read the initial reports, a picture of the crisis began to emerge. Fertilizer runoff from commercial farms along with pollution from polyphosphate-containing household detergents had loaded the Maumee, Sandusky, and tributary rivers with phosphorus and nitrogen in the decades since World War II. The nutrients created eutrophic or hypereutrophic conditions and facilitated the rapid growth of phytoplankton and other autotrophic organisms, including ever larger blooms of Microcystis by the 1960s. Realizing the ecological crisis on their hands, the governments of

the United States and Canada signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 1972. The agreement regulated pollution and coordinated remediation efforts between the two nations. However, as human-caused planetary warming raised the temperature of the lake at the end of the twentieth century, cyanobacteria growth accelerated dramatically and the Microcystis blooms progressively worsened amidst continued unregulated agricultural runoff.

Nearly as worrisome from an ecological standpoint, the death and decomposition of the nutrient-fed plankton began to deplete the lake's dissolved oxygen to create localized hypoxic or anoxic environments (dead zones). In effect, the postwar changes in agricultural production, household labor and technologies, transportation, industrial output, and overall human consumption patterns constituted a Great Acceleration—an industrial-scale hijacking of biogeochemical cycles and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems on a level never before seen in our history. The residents of Toledo were but the latest frontline victims of humanity's seventy-year experiment in the large-scale manipulation of the carbon, phosphorus, and nitrogen cycles.[3]

Seeking to reassure the public while also acknowledging the enormity of the ecological transformation signified by the algae bloom, Toledo's Mayor, D. Michael Collins, offered a seemingly contradictory assessment: "I don't believe we'll ever be back to normal. But this is not

[3] The most accepted starting point for our current geological or socioecological epoch, now known as the Anthropocene, begins with the Great Acceleration, commencing between roughly 1945 and 1950. Although I am critical of our ability to pinpoint such precise origins of an epoch that is still taking shape, it is important to acknowledge how human activities since the Second World War have reshaped earth systems and the societies embedded in those systems. On the Great Acceleration, see J. R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); and Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature," *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (December 2007): 614-621. For overviews of the debate to periodize (or, indeed, to *name*) the Anthropocene, see Will Steffen, et al., "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* 369, no. 1938 (March 2011): 842-867; Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519 (March 12, 2015): 171-180; and Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us* (New York: Verso, 2016).

going to be our new normal. We're going to fix this."[4] This appears to be a common, if confused and desperate, sentiment among people with a front-row seat to the Anthropocene's awesome and terrifying entanglement of human hubris, myopia, greed, desire, and ingenuity with the fragile and intricate ecosystems that sustain life. We are simultaneously awed by the changes we have wrought in such a short span of time, yet hopeful that the ill effects of the fossil fuel-injected, market-worshipping, technophilic industrialized production and consumption of the past century can still be allayed by responsible action.

While the cautiously hopeful perspective of Toledo's mayor risks minimizing the enormity of the problem and the complexity of its causes, it at least encourages action. Stakeholders have indeed worked to address the issue. Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences initiated a fertilizer applicator certification training program shortly after the water crisis. Even those farmers managing large commercial operations appear committed to soil testing and the targeted application of fertilizers. The Ohio Department of Agriculture's H2Ohio program promoting "best practices to reduce phosphorus in the Maumee River Watershed" saw nearly 2,000 growers apply for voluntary conservation funding for over one million acres of farmland in early 2020. And while the economic devastation of COVID-19 may reduce the scope of the program, there appears to be widespread support for

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[4] Tom Henry, "Water Crisis Grips Hundreds of Thousands in Toledo area, state of emergency declared," *Toledo Blade*, August 3, 2014. https://www.toledoblade.com/local/2014/08/03/Water-crisis-grips-area.html (accessed May 2, 2019). See also Emma G. Fitzsimmons, "Tap Water Ban for Toledo Residents," *New York Times*, August 3, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/04/us/toledo-faces-second-day-of-water-ban.html (accessed May 2, 2019); Michael Wines, "Behind Toledo's Water Crisis, a Long-Troubled Lake Erie," *New York Times*, August 4, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/lifting-ban-toledo-says-its-water-is-safe-to-drink-again.html (accessed May 2, 2019); Laura Arenschield, "Toledo Bearing Full Brunt of Lake Erie Algae Bloom," *Columbus Dispatch* August 4, 2014. http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/ 2014/08/04/this-bloom-is-in-bad-location.html (accessed January 21, 2015); Tom Philpott, "The Toxic Algae Are Not Done with Toledo. Not by a Long Stretch," *Mother Jones*, August 6, 2014. http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2014/08/toledos-tapwater-troubles-raise-hard-questions-about-our-ag-system (accessed May 2, 2019); Laura Arenschield, "Global Warming will Make Algae Worse," *Columbus Dispatch*, August 11, 2014. https://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/08/11/warming-will-make-algae-worse.html (accessed May 2, 2019).

more effective fertilizer use. Not only would such voluntary input reductions lower overhead costs for farmers, but they might also forestall the imposition of state regulations to curb nutrient pollution. Applying the correct amount of fertilizer in the right places and at the right time of year could essentially turn back the clock more than half a century to a time when far less agricultural runoff plagued the rivers flowing into Lake Erie. Should these measures prove insufficient, Ohio and other Great Lakes states may be poised to implement regulations, which may yet be the most effective mechanism for reducing the pollution.

These efforts are important, but they are not nearly enough. If this story was only about the relationship between Microcystis and fertilizer, then the solution would be straightforward if still difficult to implement. Unfortunately, farmers face greater existential challenges. Many are heavily in debt and reliant on subsidies and crop insurance, especially as seasonal precipitation has become less predictable and more severe. In this system, maximizing crop yields remains the surest way for farms to secure bank loans or stay afloat, and nutrient throughputs can temporarily offset underlying problems of declining soil fertility, topsoil loss, and compaction. How are we to ensure future productivity and farm income without generous fertilizer use if we cannot promote an agricultural system that allows farmers to be effective stewards of the land itself? And what of the continued threat to both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity that comes with large-scale monocrop agriculture, heavy reliance on pesticides, and profit-driven land use decisions? Once again, farmers are at least partially locked into a system of production that encourages high yields and economies of scale. Perhaps most distressing of all, what if the presence of larger Microcystis blooms is the proverbial canary in the coal mine, alerting us to imminent ecological breakdown brought on by the climate crisis? Will two-degrees Celsius planetary warming (which appears to be practically assured at this point) irrevocably alter the

lake and its shores? Are we already guaranteed to witness larger algae blooms, the expansion of dead zones, an increase in non-native species, and more violent storms coming off the lake? Does the fate of Lake Erie offer a glimpse into the future of the other Great Lakes, which are deeper and slower to warm? Ever the architects of our own destruction, current modes of agricultural production contribute to the emission of greenhouse gases, the acceleration of biogeochemical cycles, and changes in land systems that threaten the Great Lakes as well as the entire get-big-or-get-out schema that has been enshrined in U.S. farm policy for half a century.

For these reasons, people familiar with the history of western Lake Erie understand that the woes of this shallowest Laurentian lake and the land that surrounds it are almost certain to continue. But they also know that the putative origins of these crises stretch back to a period *before* the dramatic post-World War II transformation of agriculture, industry, federal policy, and consumer habits. The longer story, biologists and ecologists, environmentalists, and local historians argue, really began in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Landowners and timber companies harvested the Black Swamp forest while farmers, municipalities, and counties funded the backbreaking work of digging open ditches, channelizing streams, and laying field tile. Between the passage of Ohio's first drainage legislation in 1859 and the end of the century, the expansive wetland vanished in a flurry of human activity.[5]

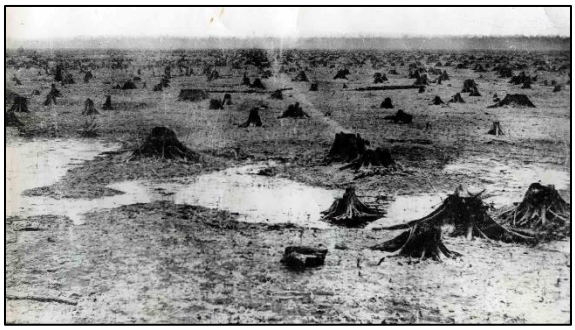

Figure 4: The first known photograph of the Black Swamp's destruction. Hancock County, Ohio, ca. 1890, Center for Archival Collections, Bowling Green State University.

[5] On the transformation of the Black Swamp, see Martin R. Kaatz, "The Settlement of the Black Swamp of Northwestern Ohio" PhD diss. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1952; Martin R. Kaatz, "The Settlement of the Black Swamp of Northwestern Ohio: Early Days," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1952-53): 23-36; Martin R. Kaatz, "The Settlement of the Black Swamp of Northwestern Ohio: Pioneer Days," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 25, no. 3a (1953): 134-156; Martin R. Kaatz, "The Settlement of the Black Swamp of Northwestern Ohio: Later Days," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1953): 201-217; Martin R. Kaatz, "The Black Swamp: A Study in Historical Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 45, no.1 (1955): 1-35; Glenn K. Rule, "The Old

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The rapid destruction of the swamp forests, wet prairies, and marshes was a twofold catastrophe for Lake Erie and local rivers. A landscape previously avoided by settler colonists now drew the attention of westward-moving migrants as reclamation projects all but rid the region of malaria and exposed the rich lacustrine soils.[6] Inhabitants of communities at the wetland's borders and new arrivals brought commercial agriculture and its extractive practices to the reclaimed land. And with no densely forested swamp to absorb and hold nutrients, heavy rains soon washed topsoil, manure, and minerals into the tiles, ditches, streams, tributaries, and rivers bound for the lake. The Maumee and Sandusky watersheds drained more than 8,000 square miles of what would soon become mostly highly productive farmland. Eventually, these rivers discharged more than half a trillion tons of runoff containing hundreds of tons of synthetic fertilizer into the lake each year. Had the forest never been cleared and the vast network of drainage tiles and open ditches never been assembled, annual blooms of toxic algae might not have plagued Lake Erie and the human communities that rely on its water.

As I learned more about the "ecosystem services" (to use the gleefully economistic term) provided by wetlands, I began to understand that the swamp and its ancient forest had been Lake Erie's greatest biological defense and the region's most diverse ecosystem. The reclamation era

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Black Swamp," *The Ohio Farmer* 207 (1961): 5-17; Peter W. Wilhelm, "Draining the Black Swamp: Henry and Wood Counties, Ohio, 1870-1920," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1984): 79-95; Carolyn V. Platt, "The Great Black Swamp," *Timeline* 4, no. 1 (February/March 1987): 34-35; Bruce E. McGarvey, "Landscape Myths of the Black Swamp: Part 1," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (1988): 57-68; Bruce E. McGarvey, "Landscape Myths of the Black Swamp: Part 2," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1988): 95-104; Dan Egan, *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2017), 212-244. On the larger ecological histories of wetland reclamation and Great Lakes environmental change, see Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997); and John L. Riley, *The Once and Future Great Lakes Country: An Ecological History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

[6] While popular narratives of the reclamation of the Black Swamp attribute its demise to the heroic Buckeye Traction Ditcher (see below), my preliminary research indicates that the wetland was mostly drained prior to the invention of the iconic drainage machine in the early 1890s. In short, the muscle power of human and nonhuman workers accomplished, in piecemeal fashion, the monumental task of draining the Black Swamp. See "Draining Swamp Lands," *Ohio Cultivator* 13, no. 7, April 1, 1857, 99; John H. Klippart, *The Principles and Practice of Land Drainage* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1861), 38.

amounted to a period of dizzying landscape transformation that affected the lake and its surrounding environs as profoundly as pollution and nutrient loading would during the post-World War II era. Indeed, paleolimnologists have used diatoms in lake sediment as environmental surrogates to conclude that beginning just before 1850 and continuing until around 1900, forest clearance, wetland reclamation, and, to a lesser extent, urban growth, dramatically increased the soil nutrients rushing into the lake from area rivers. This nutrient loading led to moderate eutrophication and the proliferation of species of phytoplankton adapted to such conditions.[7] Concurrently, the rapid expansion of western Lake Erie's commercial fishery during the 1860s placed incredible stresses on sturgeon and other species.[8] Biodiversity and habitat loss in the lake's watershed during the second half of the nineteenth century thus profoundly altered the entire lake ecosystem. According to limnological evidence, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed continued eutrophication amidst steady regional industrialization and agricultural expansion, while the period after about 1945 saw a rapid increase in the organic and inorganic pollutants consonant with the Great Acceleration.[9] Lake

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[7] Graham P. Harris and Richard Vollenweider, "Paleolimnological Evidence of Early Eutrophication in Lake Erie," *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 39, no. 4 (1982): 618-626; Jacob Verduin, "Man's Influence on Lake Erie," *Ohio Journal of Science* 69, no. 2 (March 1969): 65-70. See also the historian Natale Zappia's insightful overview of the Old Northwest's transformation into an Anglo-American agricultural frontier in Zappia, "Frontiers of Grain: Indigenous Maize, Afroeurasian Wheat, and the Origins of Industrial Food," *Early American Studies* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 215-255.

[8] H.A. Reiger and W.L. Hartman, "Lake Erie's Fish Community: 150 Years of Cultural Stresses," *Science* 180, no. 4092 (June 22, 1973): 1248-1255.

[9] The limnologist Eugene Stoermer spent his career studying diatoms in the Great Lakes. Based on this evidence he began using the term "Anthropocene" to describe what he believed to be a new geological epoch in which humanity's impact on the planet would leave a notable mark in the fossil record. Atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and Stoermer popularized the Anthropocene concept in the year 2000. Other keen observers like the science reporter Andrew Revkin coined similar terms ("Anthrocene") and noted the enormity of changes in planetary systems during the 1980s and 1990s. It is not insignificant that the Great Lakes served as one key location in which the shocking changes of the Anthropocene crystalized in scientific observation. See Eugene Stoermer, et al., "Paleolimnologic evidence of rapid recent change in Lake Erie's trophic status," *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 53, no. 6 (June 1996): 1451-1458; and Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene,'" *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (May 2000): 17-18.

sediment thus provides a useful periodization of the region's recent past and reveals that the dramatic environmental changes we have been witnessing in and around Lake Erie for the past several decades actually began in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The destruction of the Black Swamp also inaugurated a series of energy revolutions the likes of which were occurring in other parts of the industrializing world. First, as previously noted, timber companies and landowners harvested the swamp forest for building materials and fuel from the mid-nineteenth century on. Then, just as the wetland disappeared in the 1870s and '80s, wildcat oilmen discovered petroleum around the communities of Lima, Bowling Green, and Findlay. During the ensuing oil and natural gas rush, Ohio became the nation's largest producer of crude between 1895 and 1902. The extractive bonanza birthed the Marathon Oil Corporation (formerly the Ohio Oil Company) and a period of intense industrialization that further polluted the region's waterways and land. One final energy transition took shape in the 1970s as the U.S. Department of the Interior preserved some of the last remnants of the Black Swamp along the Lake Erie littoral to protect migratory bird habitats. Amid much debate, the government eventually used some of this federal land as the site of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station—a facility that has produced two of the five worst nuclear safety incidents in the country since the 1979 partial reactor meltdown at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station. Each of these energy transitions depended, in part, on either the reclamation or restoration of the Black Swamp. Despite the prognostications of twentieth- and twenty-first-century techno-

Figure 5: Irises growing at the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, June 2009. The cooling towers of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station loom in the background. Photo by Tom Arbour, http://www.ohionatureblog.com.

optimists, our technologies and energy systems have not emancipated us from "nature." To the contrary, they have further deepened and expanded our connections to and reliance upon other-than-human objects, organisms, and energies.

Through all these changes, the region's rural residents relied on new agricultural tiling materials and ditch-digging machinery to upgrade or repair the subterranean infrastructures that constantly shuttled away water. One of these technologies, a locally invented trenching machine called the Buckeye Traction Ditcher, followed national and transnational circuits of capitalization and empire around the world to drain swamplands and irrigate deserts. Various ditcher models facilitated reclamation projects in the bayous of Florida and Louisiana during the early decades of the twentieth century, as well as irrigation projects in cities such as Phoenix.[10]

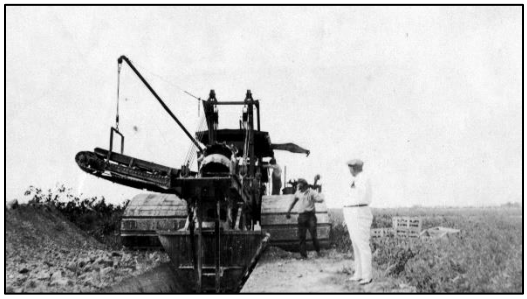

Figure 6: A Buckeye Traction Ditcher at work in the Everglades, ca. 1913. Photo entitled, "Ditcher machine operating in the Everglades Drainage District," State Library and Archives of Florida, M82-41, Box 1, FF12

By the mid-1920s, a British engineering firm purchased machines built at the Buckeye factory in Findlay to help carry out the Gezira Scheme in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.[11] Wetland and desert environments across the planet soon came to resemble the former Black Swamp as metastasizing hydraulic infrastructures of irrigation canals or field tiles carried water to or from emergent commercial

[10] On the Buckeye Traction Ditcher and its inventor, James B. Hill, see Frank C. Perkins, "The Buckeye Traction Ditcher," *Scientific American*, September 10, 1904, 177-178; and James Buchanan Hill, *About 32,000 Days of Hill*, ed. Robert E. Klein (Garland, TX: self-published, 1999), Buckeye Traction Ditcher Collection, Gar Wood Industries, MS 380, box 1, folder 4. On early ditcher sales in Louisiana, see Everet T. Bowen Journal, 1910, Buckeye Traction Ditcher Collection, Gar Wood Industries, MS 380, box 5, folder 2, Special Collections, Bowling Green State University. On irrigation in Phoenix, see "A Machine that Beats Shoveling," *Arizona Republican*, March 3, 1908, 5.

[11] "Soudan Finding Ditcher Success," *Findlay Morning Republican*, July 11, 1922, 2; "Leaves for England," *Findlay Morning Republican*, July 15, 1922, 5. On the larger history of the Gezira Scheme, see Maurits W. Ertsen, *Improvising Planned Development on the Gezira Plain, Sudan, 1900-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

agricultural landscapes. Even after it ceased to exist, then, the Black Swamp lived on as a kind of "ghost in the machine."[12] The problems the wetland had posed to local farmers since the first American settler colonists arrived just after the War of 1812 contributed directly to the development of the ditcher. Decades of back-breaking work digging ditches and laying tile sedimented in this steam-powered labor-saving machine, for the Black Swamp was the Buckeye Traction Ditcher's *raison d'être* and initial testing ground. In short, the wetland co-created the ditcher and thus played a role in the orgiastic destruction of important and vulnerable ecosystems across the planet. This new fossil-fueled ditch-digging technology and subsequent earth-moving machines produced by the Buckeye Traction Ditcher Company helped make possible the destruction of half of the planet's wetlands during the twentieth century.[13] The ditcher was little more than the Black Swamp's history of settler colonialism made durable and mobile.[14]

This complex story is but one among thousands of histories of the Anthropocene in microcosm, a piece of a larger tapestry of human-initiated ecological devastation and, one must hope, creative adaptation. Since August 2014, many residents of Northwest Ohio and other

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[12] Here I repurpose Gilbert Ryle's critique of Cartesian Dualism. Ryle's "ghost in the machine" acidly describes Descartes' belief that "mind" and "matter" are two separate and opposite processes and states of being in which disembodied minds operate simultaneously but independently from physical bodies and the rest of the material world. For Ryle, mind and matter are entangled and co-constitutive and thus cannot function as opposites. In my gloss on the subject, the ghost in the machine refers to the active role the Black Swamp played in the creation of a literal machine. Even as the swamp was reclaimed, its effects—just like the effects of individual human beings on the world—lived on in the invention. To argue that the wetland along with the inventor James B. Hill co-created the Buckeye Traction Ditcher is to subscribe to the extended mind hypothesis and reject the terms of Cartesian Dualism, as Ryle does. See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of the Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), 22-23; Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (January 1998): 7-19; and LeCain, *Matter of History*, 112-122.

[13] My thinking here has been heavily influenced by Linda Nash, "Traveling Technology? American Water Engineers in the Columbia Basin and the Helmand Valley," in *Where Minds and Matters Meet: Technology in California and the West*, ed. Volker Janssen (Berkeley and San Marino: The University of California Press and Huntington Library, 2012), 135-158.

[14] Bruno Latour, "Technology is Society made Durable," *The Sociological Review* 38, no. 1 (May 1990): 103-131.

interested observers appear to be confronting this history and critically examining how the environmentally destructive actions of the past became habituated in contemporary socioeconomic and technopolitical systems that cannot sustain all, or even the majority, of us.[15] Much like the advocates of more effective fertilizer application techniques, wetland biologist William J. Mitsch and the Black Swamp Conservancy land trust seek to turn back the clock by rehabilitating the region's ecosystems. Their vision is one of wetland restoration—a return, partial and imperfect though it may be, to a time when great elm and ash trees stretched out to cover the soggy ground and native marshes dotted the landscape. They fight an uphill battle, but their successes in preserving and reestablishing wetland pockets both large and small might secure the region's environmental future.[16]

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[15] Apocalyptic prognostications about the future of life in the Anthropocene are not difficult to come by. For a sobering account of what horrors may be in store for us with 2.5 or 3 degrees warming, see, for example, Sandra Díaz, et al., "Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services—unedited advance version," https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/summary_for_policymakers_ipbes_global_assessment.pdf (accessed June 19, 2020); World Meteorological Association and United Nations Climate Advisory Group, "United in Science," https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocms/s3fs-public/ckeditor/files/United_in_Science_ReportFINAL_0.pdf?XqiG0yszsU_sx2vOehOWpCOkm9RdC_gN (accessed June 19, 2020); Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, *Global Wetland Outlook: State of the world's wetlands and their services to people 2018* (Gland, Switzerland: Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2018), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b256c78e17ba335ea89fe1f/t/5b9ffd2e0e2e7277f629eb8f/1537211739585/RAMSAR+GWO_ENGLISH_WEB.pdf (accessed June 19, 2020)

[16] Sharon Levy, "Learning to Love the Great Black Swamp," *Undark*, March 31, 2017, https://undark.org/2017/03/31/great-black-swamp-ohio-toledo/ (accessed June 17, 2020); Tom Henry, "Researcher says Great Black Swamp Experiment could help Lake Erie," *Toledo Blade*, July 28, 2019, https://www.toledoblade.com/local/environment/2019/07/28/great-black-swamp-lake-erie-experiment-drainage-marshland-again-study/stories/20190728005 (accessed June 17, 2020); Tom Henry, "Economics might support grandiose Black Swamp Restoration," *Toledo Blade*, August 3, 2019, https://www.toledoblade.com/local/environment/2019/08/03/great-black-swamp-restoration-lake-erie-algae-bloom/stories/20190803126 (accessed June 17, 2020); "Hidden in Plain Sight: the Great Black Swamp of Northwest Ohio," *Midstory*, https://www.midstory.org/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-great-black-swamp-of-northwest-ohio/ (accessed June 17, 2020).

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Perhaps the most encouraging, though short-lived, development since 2014 has been the city of Toledo's passage of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights (LEBOR) in February 2019.[17] The bill "establishes irrevocable rights for the Lake Erie Ecosystem to exist, flourish and naturally evolve, a right to a healthy environment for the residents of Toledo, and which elevates the rights of the community and its natural environment over powers claimed by certain corporations." It also possesses an enforcement mechanism that distributes responsibility for the lake and the ability to speak for it, Lorax-style, among the citizenry: "The City of Toledo, or any resident of the City, may enforce the rights and prohibitions of this law through an action brought in the Lucas County Court of Common Pleas, General Division. In such an action, the City of Toledo or the resident shall be entitled to recover all costs of litigation, including, without limitation, witness and attorney fees."[18] The bill and its advocates have sought to bring Lake Erie firmly into the realm of political decision-making. If Lucas County were to enforce the law, the long-term environmental, economic, and public health consequences of present agricultural and industrial activities would be subject to closer scrutiny by a broader and more capacious body politic.

Unsurprisingly, the Lake Erie Bill of Rights faced an immediate legal challenge. The typically low voter turnout in the February 2019 special election meant that the law never appeared to have more than a core group of enthusiastic advocates. Yet, a larger turnout at the

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[17] "Ohio city votes to give Lake Erie personhood status over algae blooms," *The Guardian*, February 28, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/feb/28/toledo-lake-erie-personhood-status-bill-of-rights-algae-bloom (accessed June 23, 2020).

[18] Lake Erie Bill of Rights, full text, https://www.utoledo.edu/law/academics/ligl/pdf/2019/Lake-Erie-Bill-of-Rights-GLWC-2019.pdf (accessed June 22, 2020). My reference to Dr. Seuss' famous *The Lorax* is not incidental. In the original edition, the author referenced the abysmal state of Lake Erie within the text. Later editions removed the reference after the health of the lake ecosystem improved dramatically after the passage of the National Environmental Protection Act (1969) and the Clean Water Act (1972). See Egan, *Death and Life of the Great Lakes*, 217, 223-224.

polls likely would only have helped LEBOR pass. Opponents of the bill were not the Toledoans who had struggled to find drinking water a few years earlier, but rather the farmers living upriver and the Ohio Department of Agriculture that represented their interests. One farmer filed a lawsuit immediately after the passage of the bill, citing the fact that even as he sought to be a responsible custodian of his land, he could not guarantee that he would be able to reduce fertilizer runoff to nothing.[19] Ultimately, a federal judge struck down the law, stating that the bill of rights was "unconstitutionally vague and exceeds the power of municipal government in Ohio."[20] Nevertheless, the short existence of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights has contributed to larger discussions about the rights of vulnerable ecosystems and our obligations as citizens and caretakers of our common home.

Indeed, the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, the "Climate Kids" lawsuit *Juliana v. United States*, and a cluster of other laws and proposed legislation in places like New Zealand, India, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile have all stretched the individualist and rights-based philosophical underpinnings of political liberalism in important ways. LEBOR and similar legislative and judicial efforts constitute a relatively coherent rights of nature (RON) legal movement that could yet fundamentally transform the obligations, rights, and prohibitions codified in the law.[21] LEBOR briefly opened the possibility that the existential interests of the lake and its tributary

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[19] Jason Daley, "Toledo, Ohio, Just Granted Lake Erie the Same Legal Rights as People," *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 1, 2019, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/toledo-ohio-just-granted-lake-erie-same-legal-rights-people-180971603/ (accessed June 22, 2020); Laura Johnston, "Toledoans approve first Lake Erie Bill of Rights. Farmer sues over law's constitutionality," *Cleveland.com*, February 27, 2019, https://www.cleveland.com/news/2019/02/toledoans-approve-first-lake-erie-bill-of-rights-farmer-sues-over-laws-constitutionality.html (accessed June 24, 2020).

[20] Tyler Gillett, "Federal judge rules Lake Erie Bill of Rights Unconstitutional," *The Jurist*, February 29, 2020, https://www.jurist.org/news/2020/02/federal-judge-rules-lake-erie-bill-of-rights-unconstitutional/ (accessed, June 24, 2020).

[21] One early and important law article on this topic is Christopher D. Stone, "Should Trees have Standing? – Toward legal Rights for Natural Objects," *Southern California Law Review* 45 (1972): 450-501.

rivers, walleye, coastal marshes, cyanobacteria, struggling farmers, commercial fisheries, and parched city dwellers might all become central matters of concern in a representative democracy.[22]

Despite the nullification of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, residents of the watershed cannot ignore the lake's woes and the many competing interests that must be considered as we face accelerating changes in local environments and the entire earth system. Ultimately, legislation such as LEBOR and legal challenges over our responsibilities to future generations might institutionalize the kind of seven-generation sustainability practiced by Haudenosaunee leaders like Onondaga faith keeper Oren Lyons or the cathedral thinking demanded by Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg.

I followed the story of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights as a casual observer while immersed in teaching and dissertation writing. As I researched eighteenth-century Indigenous communities and imperial attempts to exert control over the lands and peoples living north and west of the Ohio River, I was struck by the ways that LEBOR echoed the historical issues I was exploring; namely, the tensions between, on the one hand, the Euro-American laws and legal philosophies that constituted one important facet of colonialism and, on the other, Indigenous territoriality, which could not fit within British or U.S. legal and military assertions of sovereignty.

I was intrigued by the Lake Erie Bill of Rights because it sought to achieve recognition of the legal *standing* of the lake—a concept roughly approximating Indigenous cosmological

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[22] See Bruno Latour's discussion of a "parliament of things" that might replace the dogmatic idealism of modern politics, philosophy, and jurisprudence with a relational politics. See Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 142-145; Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005). See also Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) for a cogent political theory of how the material world might be incorporated into the demos.

praxis—through the very judicial system that had dispossessed the Native communities of the Black Swamp to begin with. How are we to think about this movement and the ways in which it echoes the lives and beliefs of the dispossessed? If LEBOR had withstood its legal challenge, representatives for the lake would be able to sue polluters to ensure its protection. A large community of citizens would, in theory, invest themselves in the continued health of this newly recognized member of society. In a sense, then, LEBOR, like the Black Swamp restoration efforts and Ohio State's fertilizer applicator certification training program, sought to turn back the clock on Lake Erie. In this case, activists hoped to imbue the lake with a kind of spirit, animacy, or agency through its recognized legal standing. Such a move might eventually return the region to an ecological moment before private property eroded the commons and before monotheistic or secular cosmologies drew a final, harsh distinction between agential humans and the supposedly static, lifeless material world upon which man imposes his will (and note the purposefully gendered language here).[23] Whether or not the architects of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights explicitly drew upon the animistic pantheism of the region's historical Indigenous inhabitants for inspiration, I do not know. But the parallel between the pantheisms of the Native peoples of Turtle Island (North America) and the agency accorded the living world by the RON legal movement is notable.[24]

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[23] On the gendered dimensions of environmental destruction, the classic historical work is Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980). See also Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989). For useful overviews of ecofeminism and the field's important insights into the ways in which ecological destruction consistently overlaps with the domination of women and queer and non-binary people, see Asmae Ourkiya, "All you ever wanted to know about ecofeminism," *RTE Brainstorm*, https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2020/0219/1116323-ecofeminism/ (accessed June 24, 2020); and Asmae Ourkiya, "Queering Ecofeminism: Towards an Anti-Far-Right Environmentalism," NiCHE, https://niche-canada.org/2020/06/23/queering-ecofeminism-towards-an-anti-far-right-environmentalism/ (accessed June 24, 2020).

[24] Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20-34.

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On this resonance between Indigenous belief systems and the rights of nature legal movement, I am of two minds. It is true that Native North American societies generally understood (and understand) spirit to inhere in a wider range of entities than many monotheistic and secular cosmologies allow. LEBOR can be understood as a movement that brings U.S. law into closer alignment with Native American praxis. Granting legal personhood to a lake quite literally animates the lake insofar as Western jurisprudence is concerned. The Lake Erie Bill of Rights briefly permitted the representatives of a nonhuman entity to bring the lake into a Lucas County courtroom in a meaningful, substantive way. This might be as close to giving an entity spiritual standing as Western legal theory will permit. And as Dina Gillio-Whitaker, a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes, notes, the RON approach has proved moderately useful for Indigenous communities fighting to preserve their land and water against oil pipelines and mining operations.[25]

And yet, I am hesitant to draw too many parallels between LEBOR and Indigenous spiritual practices, customs, and social forms. Euro-American environmental activists have looked to Indigenous cosmologies for inspiration and guidance since at least the counterculture, and often the adoption of Native practices has taken the form of crass cultural appropriation or caricature. Generally speaking, I believe that the rights of nature movement broadly and the Lake Erie Bill of Rights in particular have steered clear of explicitly citing, idealizing, or misrepresenting the belief systems of the descendants of peoples whose lands Toledo now occupies. Nevertheless, the RON movement does fit firmly within a legal system littered with broken treaties, myths of conquest (*Johnson v. M'Intosh*), and hegemonic ideas about the nature

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[25] Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as the Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 154-157.

of sovereignty, property, and citizenship. It is not unreasonable to doubt that a legal system that has long proven hostile to the beliefs, social forms, and very lives of Indigenous peoples could be made to reflect the cosmologies of those peoples.

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I initially set out to research the patchy Black Swamp reclamation project and its immediate and long-term socioecological consequences, but the simultaneous presence and absence of Indigenous peoples in popular accounts of the wetland and its surrounding environs bothered me. How could the dominant human actors for most of the Black Swamp's existence recede so easily into the background of the accounts we find in newspapers, documentaries, and popular histories? Initially seeking to provide a decent background sketch of the region's history before the nineteenth century, I dug into the story of the American conquest of the Ohio Country and lower Great Lakes and realized that I could not understand the Black Swamp at all until I figured out its history before the arrival of American settler colonists. I have not yet made it back to the issues and concerns outlined above, though they do inform this study.

What I found in the pre-1800 history of the region was a world defined by Indigenous communities. Native peoples settled the wetland ecotone, adapted to the landscape, and, eventually, mounted resistance to colonial dispossession. Their mutually constitutive belief systems and subsistence practices produced ways of

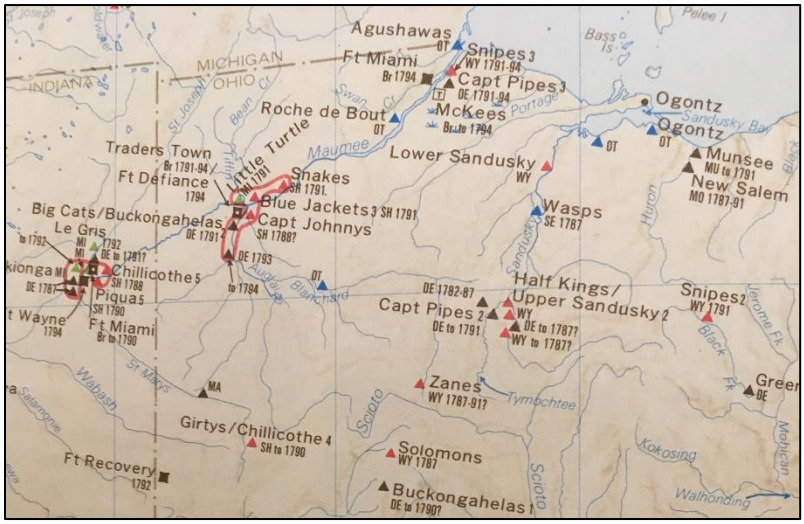

Figure 7: Native villages clustered near the Black Swamp during the era of American conquest. "Frontier in Transition, 1787-1794," in Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 88.

living that could be sustained over generations and that enabled communities to resist imperial and colonial incursions into their homelands. Before the American occupation of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, Indigenous peoples transformed many local ecosystems without destroying multispecies refugia. Even the era of colonial "conquest" between roughly 1730 and the end of the century did not witness large-scale environmental change. Yet, as I have already suggested, this period created the conditions of possibility for the ecological changes that followed in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Arriving at a project in this way has many potential drawbacks. First, as a student of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century United States, I experienced a predictable learning curve. I still often feel like an interloper in the historiographies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America. Second, and more important, if this study seeks to explain the putative origins of socioecological crises plaguing the Black Swamp region today, then I risk conflating problems caused by colonialism and racism, technoscience, and industrial capitalism. Even worse, by linking the often negative environmental changes of the past two centuries to settler colonialism and the extirpation of Indigenous peoples, I might very well reproduce the familiar "ecological Indian" or "noble savage" tropes that remain potent tools of settler colonial racial politics. I hope that my narrative has overcome these pitfalls. In the chapters that follow, I contend that Native peoples transformed their lands in a variety of ways that reveal neither some fictive "harmony" with "nature" nor wanton ecosystem destruction. They domesticated their landscape, constructing niches within their ecosystems in the way that all organisms do. Indeed, by creating homelands and seasonal rhythms of life along the wetland edges, Indigenous villagers prolonged their control over the region even as the United States tightened its grip on the lower Great Lakes. Nevertheless, the anemic paper "conquest" of the region prior to the arrival of settler

colonists actually did begin to erode Indigenous sovereignty in subtle, insidious ways that matter to the later moments of agricultural commercialization, industrialization, and technological development.

Ultimately, I am convinced that the dispossession of Ohio's Native peoples inaugurated new relationships between human beings and the forests, prairies, meadows, and marshes of the Black Swamp. The world we now occupy—a world of toxic algae blooms, pipeline protests, lead-suffused drinking water, species extinction, and global warming—is one built by the extirpative violence of colonialism as much as anything else. Perhaps the Lake Erie Bill of Rights hit close to the mark. Although it depended on American jurisprudence and (colonial) liberal notions of individual rights, LEBOR offered a glimmer of hope, a chance to reconfigure the law by according status to a vibrant, agential nonhuman assemblage in much the same ways that animistic pantheism (in its many varied forms) has understood and enacted the world. Will listening to, learning from, and following the lead of Indigenous peoples restore the landscapes and relationships we will desperately need in the decades to come? Will those of us who have benefitted immensely from settler colonialism have the humility and foresight to pay attention? In all of the efforts to turn back the clock on Lake Erie—reducing fertilizer output, restoring wetland pockets, speaking out on behalf of the lake as though it matters and as though we depend upon freshwater for our survival—there has yet to be an effort to reckon with settler colonialism itself. Descendants of the Odawa, Wyandot, and Miami villagers who had clustered at the edges of the wetland precisely because of its many natural advantages and welcomed displaced Ohio Valley peoples into their communities now live 800 miles away in the very different environment of subtropical northeastern Oklahoma. Are they not still a part of this history?

PREFACE (continued)

I am perhaps ill-suited to comment further on how life in and around Lake Erie will play out in the Anthropocene or whether we have it in us to repair relationships that have long been shaped by the violence of racialization, dispossession, exploitation, and malignant neglect. What I might be able to discuss, however, are the ways in which Indigenous people matter to the histories of the Black Swamp and the surrounding region, and how the forces of Euro-American colonialism initiated the socioecological transformations that we are still coming to grips with.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main point of my overly long preface has been to illuminate some ways in which matters of historical fact are entangled with matters of ethical concern. The conflicts of the past and the predicaments of the present are never as isolated from one another as we may wish. Similarly, "my" research and writing cannot be separated from the people who have educated, guided, nurtured, loved, and cared for me over the years. I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank those people without whom I would not have completed a PhD.

My wife, Jen Stockdale, gave me the courage and fortitude to make it to the end of this journey. I will properly recognize Jen as I conclude these acknowledgements, but she also deserves to be mentioned first. Although she has not had time to read much of the dissertation, it reflects her hard work as much as mine.

My project took shape at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I owe the tenderest and most heartfelt debt to my dear friend and mentor Corey Capers. Conversations with Corey are joyful, challenging, intense, and illuminating. His influence can be found on nearly every page of this project, and I look forward to our collaborations in the years to come. My advisor Robert Johnston has been equally important. I doubt I could have survived the final months of writing while juggling a full teaching load and the COVID-19 pandemic without Robert's careful editing and constant, steadfast support. Thank you, Robert, for guiding me to the finish! Elizabeth Todd-Breland has mentored my development as an academic more than anyone. She taught me how to teach, how to advise students, how to edit, and how to get a job. I cannot ever repay Elizabeth for her kindness, generosity, and repeated votes of confidence. Jeff Sklansky made me want to be a historian of the early republic, warmly invited me into historiographical conversations, and never made me feel like anything less than a competent historian (even when I was far from it). Chris

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Boyer sparked my interest in Latin American history, broadened my understanding of environmental history, and always made time to chat with me on the train, in coffee shops, or even at his house. Susan Sleeper-Smith of Michigan State University graciously gave up time during the summer to read my dissertation and serve on my committee. Susan's analyses have deeply influenced my work. Tim Herbert gave me the best teaching advice I have received in preparation for the job market. I cannot thank him enough for being such a generous intellectual collaborator. Hannah Landsman keeps history graduate students at UIC organized. Without her or the late Linda Van Pueynbroeck, I could not have navigated university bureaucracy.

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Between my MA and PhD, I spent two years as a research assistant in the Policy Studies program at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies while my wife pursued an MFA. My boss, David Cortright, and his wife, Karen Jacob, welcomed Jen and me into their lives, and I spent two wonderful years at Kroc working with a team of committed peace scholars and graduate students. I will remain forever inspired by the scholars and activists with whom I worked there.

Professionally, I have found a home at Governors State University. I was fortunate to land at GSU as a visiting instructor and am even luckier to have gotten a tenure-track position

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (continued)

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Other friends, colleagues, and mentors who deserve special thanks for their encouragement and intellectual generosity include Matthew Kruer, Zach Nowak, Rachel Steely, Thomas Andrews, Tim LeCain, Kip Curtis, John Abbott , Jim Sack, Mark Liechty, Paul Simpson, Cat Jacquet, Adam Mertz, Louis Mercer, Rick Elliott, Caleb Hardner, Jill Jozwiak, Michal Wilczewski, Manamee Guha, James Mestaz, Michael Goode, Jenna Nigro, Clint Sandvick, Diedre Helmstetter Sandvick, Carrie Adkins, Feather Crawford, Luis Ruiz, Nick Chiorian, Colleen Call Smith, Vanessa Myers, Karstin Painter, Allison Bertke Downey, and Ryan Downey. My undergraduate students at UO, IU South Bend, UIC, SAIC, and GSU make academia worthwhile. I thank them for joining me in historical inquiry and for helping me to become a more effective teacher.

I owe much to my family. My parents, Todd Fackler and Holly Harman Fackler, engaged me in conversations about sustainable agriculture and global warming decades before I pursued environmental history. My siblings, Evan and Libby, and their respective spouses, Becca and Larry, have been cheerleaders, confidants, and welcome distractions from writing. My grandparents, Dottie Harman, Worth Harman, and the late Zanette Fackler all encouraged me to pursue higher education. And through storytelling they each helped me to understand local and regional histories long before I considered a career path. Betsy Fackler, Bob Kuehn, Andy Kuehn, Steve Harman, and Amy Harman have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams.

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I am fortunate to have married into a wonderfully supportive family. Ann and Tom Stockdale treat me like their own child and have provided constant, steady encouragement for my entire graduate career. Mike and Brittany Stockdale and their wonderful boys, Luke and Ethan, have provided soul-nourishing family time and constant love. Tom Humphrey was the first historian I knew on a personal level. Since I began dating his niece Tom has enthusiastically shared his knowledge of history and the historical profession. Our long conversations over the phone and during family visits mean a lot to me. It is no exaggeration to say that I would have found this path far more treacherous were it not for Tom's guidance.

Jen has been with me every step of this long journey. We met on our college cross country team and became acquainted during evening study sessions. After college when I was rudderless, she pushed me to imagine a fulfilling career path and believed in me when I had little confidence and even less life experience. I love every minute of our stimulating, challenging, rambling conversations. And while we currently have little time for discussions of poetry and poststructuralism, Jen remains my most trusted intellectual partner. Most important, Jen has been my partner in life. As my research took me further into the past, Jen kept me grounded in the concerns of the present and future. Our kind, generous daughter Emily was born as I embarked on the dissertation, and she has enriched my life in ways I could not have imagined. It is only fitting that Jen and I await our second child as I conclude this stage of the project. Life with a young family presents its share of logistical challenges, but Jen and Emily (and thoughts of the soon-to-arrive John) have made even the most difficult moments of this process joyful. As my family and I embark on the next chapter of our journey, we look to the future with hope and a commitment to making our collective world a bit more equitable, livable, and kind.

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SUMMARY

This study narrates a history of the Indigenous inhabitants of the Black Swamp region, a nearly 2,000 square-mile wetland located between the Maumee and Sandusky rivers in the southwestern Lake Erie basin. For thousands of years, diverse Native communities established and maintained villages at the wetland edges. These peoples developed intimate relationships with the ecosystem and benefitted from the sustenance and protection it provided. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the imperial designs of France, Britain, and the United States transformed these relationships and led to the erosion of Indigenous power in the region.

"Domesticating the Country" attends to the material conditions that made possible political, military, and diplomatic power in and around the Black Swamp. As such, the Black Swamp is understood to be an integral part of the political power exercised by Indian communities. Indeed, until the 1790s both the Black Swamp and the larger Ohio Country were firmly controlled and effectively utilized by Indigenous peoples. The food, furs, and protection provided by the wetland enabled Native communities to successfully maintain political autonomy during the era of French colonialism and to repel imperial incursions by British and American forces between the 1760s and 1790s. A coalition of Black Swamp and Ohio Valley peoples struggled against the United States' claims of sovereignty for nearly two decades after the beginning of the American Revolution. Eventually, these efforts failed. No spectacular military defeat marked the decline of Indigenous power in the Ohio Country. The Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 saw the capitulation of the multitribal Western Indian Confederacy after only a brief clash.

SUMMARY (continued)

I contend that military conquest was less a threat to Native peoples than the rapid attenuation of Indigenous subsistence practices, community viability, and forms of political power. The decline of game populations, the razing of villages and burning of fields, the application of European law to Indigenous social systems, and the insistence of legal property transfers by British and American military leaders and diplomats as a condition of battlefield defeats and treaty negotiations steadily created the conditions of possibility for the conquest of the Ohio Country in the decades prior to Fallen Timbers.

CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

Terra Nullius and the Colonial Palimpsest

I opened the quartermaster's record book hoping to get a sense of the scope of the military buildup that made the late eighteenth-century American conquest of the Ohio Country possible. The accounts of incoming and outgoing goods at Cincinnati's Fort Washington in April and May of 1793 promised to provide a snapshot of the flow of United States resources to the military efforts of the trans-Appalachian West during a frantic period between Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair's decisive losses to the powerful Western Indian Confederacy in October 1790 and November 1791, respectively, and General Anthony Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794.[1] I reasoned that the contents of the record book might allow me to glimpse the everyday objects and relationships between human beings and nonhuman and/or nonliving things that made the expansion of the American "empire of liberty" possible. How many horses lived at the fort? How much food did the garrison consume? Did soldiers appear to have ready access to materials to repair shoes and boots? The records might reasonably answer these questions.

Indeed, I found some of the information I was looking for, though none of it contributed in any significant way to my overall sense of the dynamics at work in American colonialism. As Anthony Wayne and his troops arrived at Fort Washington in 1793, the quartermaster, whose records I now held in my hands, received and distributed an array of goods over the three-week

[1] On this history, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 413-468; Colin G. Calloway, *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 210-284; and Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 98-122.

period it took to fill the pages of this particular notebook. Using only the front of each page, he neatly recorded the arrival and distribution of clapboards and ten-penny nails to shore up the blockhouses, leather for making scabbards, horseshoes, axes, tents, kettles, a sash saw, several hundred candles, quills, a shoe knife, one-inch girth buckles, shoe thread, linen bags (both new and used), pack saddles, more candles, one-half pound of marline rope, paper, wafers, salt for cavalry horses, salt for infantrymen, black powder, brass locks, even more candles, paper, more quills, more nails, chisels, and spike rods.[2] Going by the numbers, it seems that construction supplies and writing tools were as critical to the military buildup as war-making materials like black powder, saddles, and scabbards.

Overall, nothing in the records seemed especially surprising. Given that the single notebook held by the Ohio History Center happened to coincide with Wayne's arrival and a lull between military campaigns, one might reasonably expect far more quill pens than bayonets coming through the doors. In the coming months, Fort Washington would function like a haphazardly assembled machine, transforming men, horses, and an array of materials into communiques, letters, and lethal aggression against the villages that birthed and sustained the anticolonial Indigenous resistance movement. The record book thus presents a grainy picture of some of the daily activities and materials required to create empire.

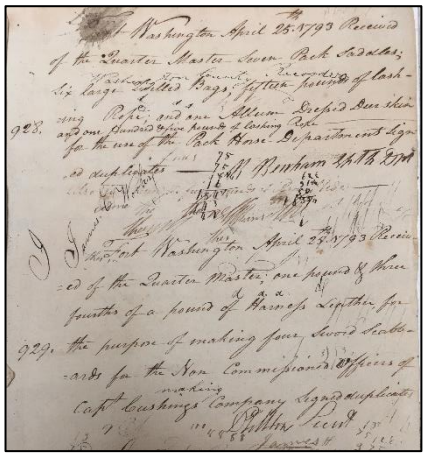

Figure 8: Page from a Quartermaster's Record Book, April 25, 1793.

Like many archival encounters, however, my experience with the quartermaster's book gave me an unexpected treat. It provided a near-perfect example of the culture of settler

[2] Quartermaster's Record Book, Fort Washington, Ohio, April-May 1793, United States Army Records, 1793-1815 [MSS 233], Ohio History Center, Columbus, Ohio.

colonialism and the erasure of Native peoples that had initially spurred me to pursue a history of Indigenous power and colonial conquest. The notebook, I discovered, was a palimpsest. As I leafed through the records, I realized that another person's handwriting appeared on the obverse side of every page. This person, a young man named James E. Worley, lived 45 years later and 100 miles away in Portsmouth, Ohio. His inscriptions occasionally bled through the pages, leaving a mark on the quartermaster's notes. And when Worley needed more room, he wrote between the quartermaster's lines or even directly over them. The twice-used book was a tangled mess of frantic purpose and youthful aspiration, but it revealed more about colonialism than anything I could have found from the unaltered notebook that the Ohio History Center's catalog description had led me to believe I was requesting.

What other history lurked behind, underneath, and in the chaotic midst of the quartermaster's record of empire building at Fort Washington? It is unclear to me how the used notebook found its way upriver to Portsmouth, although we can imagine abandoned records being carted away as the fort fell into disrepair shortly after 1800 and eventually finding their way to the next moderately large town up the river. Or perhaps the quartermaster or a family member purposely passed down the little book as a keepsake. At any rate, two generations after Anthony Wayne began his campaign to crush the Western Indian Confederacy, one beneficiary of the conquest of the Ohio Country, the nineteen-year-old James Worley, picked up the book and used it to practice his penmanship, his signature, and the wording he might use if issuing an IOU. In short, a catalog of a man-in-the-making replaced a similar record of an American empire-in-the-making.

On Worley's first page, the front of which documented the arrival of clapboards in 1793, the young man laid claim to the book: "James E. Worley his Copy Book February the 1st

1838."Above the signature line, he began practicing penmanship by writing, "Columbus discovered America in the year of our Lord 1492." Twenty times he copied the sentence in flowing cursive. Whether Worley had read the quartermaster's record book or understood the significance of the military campaign that had followed, we will never know. Nevertheless, he tapped into and perpetuated a critically important myth that would become crucial to the colonial project of the United States. By repeatedly inscribing the foundational ethnocentric, racist myth of discovery, Worley literally and metaphorically effaced the violence that made his settler-colonial present possible. As he wrote over the quartermaster's records, Worley obscured not only the everyday mechanics of the United States' expansion in the early years of the republic, but also—with his deployment of the discovery myth—the millennia of Indigenous claims to North America's diverse landscapes. He also ignored the more recent decades between the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the era of Indian removal in which he was now writing.[3] Worley may have been unaware of some of this history, but it is unlikely that he missed the fact that the inhabitants of Ohio's last Indian reserves were signing away their lands and moving west of the Mississippi just as he was writing in the old record book.[4]

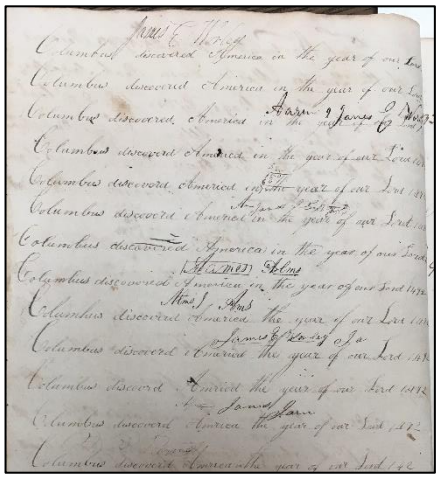

Figure 9: James Worley's penmanship: "Columbus discovered America in the year of our Lord 1492." Quartermasters Record Book

[3] On the power and force of writing technologies in the erasure of Indigenous peoples, see James Joseph Buss, *Winning the West with Words: Language and Conquest in the Lower Great Lakes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011). On the power of writing technologies more broadly, I have been influenced by Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). Methodologically, my thinking is deeply informed by Corey Capers, "Black Voices, White Print: Racial Practice, Print Publicity and Order in the Early American Republic," in *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[4] On Indian removal in Ohio and other northern states and territories, see Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014); and John P. Bowes, *Land Too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016). For a provocative

Worley used the record book to practice penmanship a few more times. He wrote aphorisms like, "Intemperance is the great evil of our country," "Some must die that others may live say the gravediggers," and "O Time O Time thou waits not." He experimented with his signature and, like many other young adults living in the commercial corridors of the rapidly changing West, he added up sums of money between the quartermaster's tidy lines. He even used a page to write a (probably) fictional IOU in which a "Joseph Neverfail" (signed in Worley's handwriting) promised to pay back $1,000 by January 1839. In total, the record book's second life witnessed James Worley practicing how to present himself as an educated, clever, and enterprising citizen of a bustling river town. A brief research excursion into Worley's life unearthed little about the man except that during the next year both of his parents died. In 1840 he married Mary Ellen Scott in Portsmouth, and he died three years later at the age of 24.[5]

The world James Worley inhabited is not the subject of this dissertation. But Worley's commitment to the uncomplicated myth of discovery as he scrawled across a record of American military aggression perfectly illustrates some of the historical and historiographical interventions that I seek to make in the chapters that follow. The notion of North America as *terra nullius* was, of course, untenable. European and Euro-American colonizers realized that the lands they sought to claim were occupied. Nevertheless, they bought, stole, killed, lied, and used treaties to secure Native lands. But in many places, this process was not straightforward, easy, practical, or even possible. Indigenous peoples mounted powerful opposition and they were aided by the landscapes (and lifeforms) that housed, nourished, and clothed them. This dissertation is about

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and important recent interpretation of Indian removal as "deportation," see Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2020).

[5] Caryn R. Fuller Shoemaker and Betty J. Sisler Rudity, *Marriage Records of Scioto County, Ohio, 1803-1860* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1987), 151; James E. Worley, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34925480/james-e-worley (accessed June 27, 2020).

one such landscape. It is, in fact, about the very landscape that Anthony Wayne marched into during the summer of 1794 after his Legion of the United States left Fort Washington—the massive 2,000-square-mile Black Swamp that followed the general course of the Maumee River from its headwaters to Lake Erie and extended eastward to the Sandusky River.

Columbus' "discovery" could not confer legitimacy upon France, Great Britain, or the United States' claims to the Black Swamp region or the Ohio Country without Wayne's military and diplomatic efforts to quell the resistance movement that had grown and flourished along the wetland edges. But Wayne did not have history on his side. The doctrine of European discovery had not yielded battlefield victories or recognitions of sovereignty during the earlier campaigns of Arthur St. Clair or William Crawford or John Bradstreet or Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville. The upper Ohio Valley and the Lake Erie basin remained resolutely Indigenous lands up though 1794.

European and American soldiers found themselves perpetually outmatched in the Black Swamp. The wetland itself was composed of imposing old-growth elm and ash forests, towering oak openings, lush meadows, inundated prairies, marshes, sandy glacial moraines, and deep tar-like mud. At the edges of this bioregion, prosperous Indigenous villages developed throughout the eighteenth century. Inhabitants utilized the rich soils of relatively well-drained riparian lands for agriculture. They hunted the abundant game, fished the rivers and Lake Erie shore, and foraged in the hardwood forests. British and American soldiers who approached this region found themselves outmatched in a landscape they did not appreciate or understand.

I argue that the Black Swamp contributed to Indigenous power in substantive ways. If we ignore the Black Swamp and the ways in which people interact with, learn from, and are changed by their material environments, then it becomes profoundly difficult to understand how the

Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Country resisted Euro-American imperialism during the eighteenth century. This study explores the ways that Native communities utilized the wetland and surrounding ecosystems prior to and after first contact with Europeans; how Indigenous land-use practices and lifeways created a domesticated landscape that magnified Indians' military and diplomatic power; and the strategies, successful or not, that French, British, and American empire builders deployed to exert control over this landscape and its peoples.

I also seek to addresses James Worley's unintentional double effacement of the past. Where Worley presented a potent myth of European conquest, I highlight the deep history of Indigenous peoples domesticating the regional landscape. Hunters generally left the Black Swamp and smaller marshes, bogs, and swamps undisturbed, not because they were forbidding, difficult to navigate environments, but because the ecological transition zones (or ecotones) at the wetland edges were areas where game animals congregated and could be easily slaughtered. The Black Swamp was, therefore, part of a planned, domesticated landscape. Where Worley obscured the banal details of everyday empire building at Fort Washington, I seek to show that attending to things like where and how people got their food can tell us a great deal about how effectively a political unit can unleash violence, protect its citizens, and engage in diplomacy. And where Worley reproduces the myth of Columbus' discovery through repetition, my narrative centers Indigenous peoples and seeks to show how concepts such as "discovery" or "law" or "sovereignty" or "property" are, in themselves, powerful tools of colonialism.

Indigenous Power in the Great Lakes

Historians of colonialism rarely fall into the trap of writing simplistically about the "power" of colonizers and the "resistance" or "agency" of the oppressed as though the two exist

in straightforward opposition. Many scholars highlight complications to convenient formulations of power by revealing the limitations of imperial power itself; or by exploring the desires, hopes, and fears that sometimes fostered intimacy between supposedly conflicting parties; or by revealing the disagreements and conflicts occurring within supposedly monolithic groups.[6] In Great Lakes Indian history, Richard White's *The Middle Ground* has productively detailed the complex diplomatic, social, and interpersonal relationships that forged a more-or-less coherent alliance between the mostly Algonquian-speaking inhabitants of the Great Lakes region and French (and later British) colonizers. In White's formulation, this alliance was sustained by mutual weakness and, of all things, habitual misunderstandings. For nearly a century, Indian leaders ably worked with Euro-Americans to produce a middle ground where conflicts could be mediated. The argument is subtle, supple, and durable. For the past 30 years, *The Middle Ground* has been the obligatory passage point for any scholar writing about the Great Lakes region and perhaps Native American history more broadly.[7]

This study owes much to White's work. And as the historian Michael McDonnell has noted, the middle ground concept works best when it is analyzing specific, on-the-ground moments. As a larger explanatory framework, McDonnell and others remain unconvinced.[8] Indeed, several historians have revised and at least partially rejected the narrative. At the risk of

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[6] Postcolonial studies presents a vast, compelling body of scholarship for historians of colonialism in North America. As an entry point, see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); and Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

[7] White, *Middle Ground*, 52-53.

[8] Michael A. McDonnell, "Rethinking the Middle Ground: French Colonialism and Indigenous Identities in the *Pays d'en Haut*," in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 79-108.

simplifying the complexity of these scholars' arguments, I believe that we can see a relatively coherent movement toward viewing Great Lakes and Ohio Valley peoples of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as powerful, relatively independent actors whose struggles against imperial encroachments were remarkably successful for more than a century. In works by Heidi Bohaker and Michael Witgen, contact between Natives and newcomers in the Great Lakes was defined by mutual discovery and Indigenous assertions of collective identity independent of European forms of diplomacy.[9] For Brett Rushforth, the dark underbelly of contact between Indigenous peoples and the French was the creation of a brutal system of chattel slavery.[10] And in Michael McDonnell and Susan Sleeper-Smith's respective accounts, the military strength of the Anishinaabeg of the northern Great Lakes and the prosperity of Wabash and Maumee Valley peoples defined the relationships between Europeans and the Algonquian speakers of the Great Lakes.[11] In their analyses, Indigenous power rather than mutual weakness set the terms of relationships with colonial regimes.

Each of these scholars has revised and refined the middle ground formulation in subtle and important ways. On balance, I believe we are seeing something of a reorientation of the master narrative. While Richard White and others showed Indigenous peoples to be dynamic agents of history alongside Europeans, most of the scholars cited above plant their narratives

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[9] Heidi Bohaker, "'Nindoodemag': The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Jan. 2006): 23-52.; Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[10] Brett Rushforth, "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 2006): 53-80; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[11] Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015); Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*.

firmly in Indian Country.[12] In effect, they are replacing the middle ground with a "native ground."[13] This reframing is less dramatic than a paradigm shift, but I believe that it is an important and necessary reorientation of the scholarship. Indigenous peoples now appear as historical actors who can function independently of European or Euro-American ambitions and influence. Their actions are not merely in reaction to French, British, or United States designs on the continent. Rather, Indigenous peoples now appear as the forward-looking agents of change that they have always been. In this regard, Michael Witgen's *An Infinity of Nations* is salutary. Witgen details the creation of a native new world in the western Great Lakes that was surely changed by European contact, but that remained dominated by diverse Native nations. To be sure, we are limited by primary sources that are mostly of European or Euro-American origin. Nevertheless, archaeology, ethnohistorical methods, insights from anthropology, and close "against-the-grain" readings of well-known historical materials continue to reveal new insights about the relationships between Indigenous groups and colonial actors as well as between different communities of Native peoples. Of course, there are drawbacks to this move to center Indigenous nations. As Pekka Hämäläinen notes, "If Native Americans were for a long time stunted as historical agents, today it is the colonists and settlers who seem to be in danger of becoming caricatured, their motives and ambitions simplified, their complexity flattened."[14] In the main, I believe scholars of the Great Lakes avoid such missteps. Even as their works highlight Indigenous agency, they also consider the complicated motivations and impulses of

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[12] Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[13] Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[14] Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 7.

Euro-American newcomers and invaders. Although I agree with Hämäläinen's concern and appreciate the middle ground narrative for its attention to the motives and actions of both Native peoples and colonizers, my study is resolutely and unapologetically concerned with Indigenous territoriality and geopolitics. The Black Swamp of the eighteenth century and earlier was a place controlled almost exclusively by diverse Native polities.

The conditions that eroded Indigenous territorial control and political independence steadily accreted over time. Beginning in the 1770s, the growing presence of borderlands settlers in Western Pennsylvania and Kentucky made it easier for Anglo-Americans to mount military campaigns against Indians or to supply backcountry forts. American aggression during and after the Revolutionary War promoted cycles of escalating violence, while U.S. attempts to establish sovereignty built upon earlier European efforts to lock Native peoples into a treaty polity that trafficked in hegemonic conceptualizations of sovereignty and land ownership.[15] As settlers moved into lands north and west of the Ohio River following the Revolution these pressures witnessed village population movements toward the relative safety of the Black Swamp region. A loose Native confederacy successfully resisted the United States for a time. The Battle of Fallen Timbers and Treaty of Greenville marked a moment of supposed conquest in which control of land and political sovereignty were dramatically transferred to the United States. Yet, the vast Indian reserve encompassing the Black Swamp that resulted from Greenville indicates that Indians maintained a notable degree of autonomy and land-based power, even after Ohio attained statehood in 1803.

[15] On the emergence of a political order based on treaties, or "treaty polity," see Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in the Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

This history has been told as a straightforward story of conquest, but it is really a story of "a conquest foretold," to use Ranajit Guha's phrasing. Conquest is "half a story pretending to be the whole."[16] The other half of the story might be a tale of Indigenous peoples' suffering or of their survival in the face of overwhelming obstacles. I tend to see the other half of the story as one of Indigenous power diminished by land-system changes, settler violence, and the hegemonic power of law. Military defeat did not produce conquest. Richard White argues a similar point when, in the final chapters of *The Middle Ground*, he focuses on the dissolution of a common cultural and diplomatic space that was replaced by popular images of either Indians or Americans as "other." In something of a revision, I contend that European legal conceptions had already become hegemonic over the previous decades. The ordering power of the law and European-style treaties and rituals made land transfer the most likely outcome of continued conflict between Indians and invaders. Yet, the middle ground thesis fails to account for the subtleties of power relations by leaving little room for hegemony. For if we are to argue that mutual misunderstanding and relative equality defined cross-cultural interactions in the Great Lakes, then our analyses have less room to consider the ways in which Native societies' landed independence allowed them to function autonomously from their French or British "fathers." Likewise, the middle ground does little to account for how European concepts like sovereignty and property became central elements of diplomacy and treaty negotiations, ultimately eroding Indigenous land-use practices and political formations. Less a story of growing misunderstanding and mistrust, the "conquest" of the Great Lakes region broadly and the Ohio Country in particular resulted from the most effective and purposeful techniques of settler colonial

[16] Ranajit Guha, "A Conquest Foretold," *Social Text* 54 (Spring 1998), 97.

governance: the simultaneous military, ecological, and legal erosion of Indigenous landscapes and lifeways.

With this critique of the middle ground thesis in mind, this dissertation makes four key interventions in the history of the Ohio Country and the Great Lakes and in discussions of Indigenous power in the context of colonialism. These interventions map fairly closely onto the four substantive chapters. First, I argue that successive generations of Indigenous inhabitants of the Black Swamp created, maintained, and augmented a domesticated landscape that was quite often unrecognizable and incomprehensible to European and Euro-American colonizers. Conventional narratives of domestication emphasize the confinement and control of various lifeforms (flora, fauna, and even certain persons such as wives, children, servants, or slaves) do not suffice in many hunter-gatherer or stateless contexts. I seek to rework the definition of domestication to account for how Indigenous societies engaged in semi-sedentary land occupancy to construct purposeful niches that did not conform to European notions of landed property or domestic relationships predicated on confinement and control. This argument suggests that if we are to understand Indigenous cultures and fully appreciate the power of Indian societies, then we must explore histories prior to European contact. We must especially acknowledge that the past worlds archaeologists help us to glimpse were constructed with intention and care.

Second, and relatedly, I contend that everyday subsistence practices and seasonal migrations sedimented in human bodies. For the peoples of the Black Swamp, flexible food procurement strategies and annual movements across a relatively large region imparted knowledge of a vast countryside and gave villages and hunting bands experience traveling great distances, killing moving prey, identifying edible forage, and dealing with periodic food scarcity.

In short, Indigenous peoples' sociocultural practices gave them clear advantages against European imperial forces. I contend that histories of contact between Native peoples and newcomers need to attend not just to diplomatic relations and moments of material and cultural exchange, but also to the often incommensurate lifeways and land-use practices that gave Indigenous societies clear material advantages.

Third, I argue that efforts by France, Great Britain, and the United States to claim sovereignty over the Native-controlled Ohio Country depended on the use of law to make it appear as though the world was divided into two natural categories: the ideal and the material (or mind and matter or culture and nature). In European legal doctrine, sovereignty and property appeared as two separate forms of authority. Sovereign power was the right to rule people while property was a right to control material things. In practice, of course, the two categories bled into one another again and again. But the conceptualization of law and the legitimation of power in this way permitted nation-states to claim sovereign rights that they could not hope to actualize on the ground in the material world. The law helped to erect and maintain distinctions between the realm of ideas and the realm of matter, the rationality of property and the arbitrariness of customary or usufruct rights, the universality of sovereign authority and the local particularity of village leadership, the culture of Europe and the nature of America. In laying out this argument, I suggest that diplomacy and law functioned hegemonically to naturalize and legitimize conquest in ways that warfare could not. In this sense, even the relatively peaceful middle ground of diplomatic and cultural contact contained the force of incredible violence.

Finally, I conclude by sketching out some of the material conditions, such as military invasions designed to burn fields of corn, the decline of game populations, and the arrival of diseases, that enabled American treaty negotiators to begin the process of subordinating Native

communities and to enact the sovereignty that Euro-Americans had sought to achieve for so many decades. I contend that changes in ecosystems alongside the increasingly hegemonic power of European-style law and the more immediate threat of settler encroachments eroded Indigenous autonomy in the final decade of the eighteenth century. Of course, the story did not end there. For about four decades after the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Treaty of Greenville, Odawa, Potawatomi, Wyandot, Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and Seneca villages continued to exist in Ohio. For the first twenty years of this period, the Black Swamp protected these communities from settlers and U.S. treaty negotiators. For the final two decades, between roughly 1815 and the late 1830s, Ohio's Indian peoples occupied much reduced reservation land and lived alongside missionaries, traders, and settlers. In some sense, the early decades of the nineteenth century constitute the true colonial history of Ohio peoples, for they found themselves colonized by a settler invasion for the first time. The final decades of the eighteenth century amounted to a history of continued Indigenous territorial power and its slow, but steady attenuation.

Chapter Summaries

The arguments outlined above appear in the dissertation in the approximate order in which I have just presented them. Because the narrative proceeds chronologically, however, readers will find discussions of various components of these larger arguments in multiple places. Bearing that in mind, I will briefly outline each chapter. In chapter 2, I begin with an examination of the deep history of the Black Swamp until the Iroquois Wars all but depopulated the region. Relying on archaeological reports, ecological and geological studies, and early colonial records, I argue that the Black Swamp has been part of a domesticated landscape for

thousands of years. Human inhabitants purposefully altered some local environments and left others alone in order to maximize the diversity of food available to them during annual movements across a large, though relatively confined region. Like Richard White, I argue that seventeenth-century Iroquois aggression likely had a deleterious effect on the peoples forced to leave the Black Swamp for the shorter growing seasons of the western population centers like Green Bay. By exploring history before the period of European contact, I offer a longue durée perspective on the lifeways and land-use practices of Native communities in the region. To be sure, colonialism amounted to an incredibly destructive suite of changes in Indians' lands and lives, but colonizers appear less powerful as we consider the generations of accumulated biogeographical knowledge upon which most Indigenous bands could draw. Bearing in mind that Native peoples occupied and controlled extensive territory, European newcomers appear far weaker than they might if I had begun the story at the moment of first contact. Following environmental historians like James Rice and Thomas Andrews, I bridge the gap between "prehistory" and "history" to consider a single place over a very long period.[17]

I continue my examination of land occupancy in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 details the resettlement of the Black Swamp in the early eighteenth century after the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. Using both French and British imperial sources—ranging from official correspondence to trader, missionary, and Indian agent accounts—I show how the Black Swamp ecotone became a refuge and buffer zone of sorts as Detroit Wyandots and Odawas settled at opposite edges of the wetland between the 1730s and 1760s. My account largely ignores the Miami villages at the Maumee River's headwaters, which Susan Sleeper-Smith's recent work

[17] James D. Rice, *Nature and History in the Potomac Country from Hunter-Gatherers to the Age of Jefferson* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Thomas G. Andrews, *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

has examined in magnificent detail. I focus instead on the communities along the lower Maumee and Sandusky. In chapter 4, I look at two clusters of sources—Indian captivity narratives that offer insight into the lives of Wyandots, Odawas, and Ohio Iroquois living along the Sandusky River and correspondence between British officials stationed at forts throughout the region, but mainly those discussing the small blockhouse constructed near Sandusky Bay in 1761. By juxtaposing the challenges Sandusky area villagers and the inhabitants of Fort Sandusky each faced in procuring food from season to season, I reveal how the embodied skills fostered by semi-sedentary lifeways enabled Indian communities to exercise impressive territorial power. Likewise, I reveal the significant limitations of French and British claims of sovereignty. Following Sleeper-Smith, I conclude that the ways in which Indian peoples utilized their environments yielded prosperity and political power.[18] From this perspective, the Black Swamp and the larger Great Lakes and Ohio Valley regions appear to be a Native ground rather than a middle ground. Europeans maintained a presence beyond the Appalachian Mountains and the St. Lawrence Valley only with the permission of Native nations.

Chapter 3 also argues that failed French and British attempts to establish sovereignty over the lands and peoples of the Ohio Country still succeeded in producing hegemonic ways of conceptualizing the landscape and the separation of abstract political power (sovereignty) and ownership of land (property). I closely examine a few examples of official correspondence and records of imperial rituals for claiming sovereignty to outline this argument. Nevertheless, Indigenous territorial power persisted into the era of the American Revolution.

Finally, chapter 5 concludes the study with a look at American encroachments into the Ohio Country and the role of the Black Swamp in providing food and shelter in the storm of

[18] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*.

United States colonialism. Even though the valorization of warfare in popular memory and historical accounts has given way to more detailed, nuanced, and capacious studies that attend to cultural beliefs and social relations, our accounts of this history still look to military victories and defeats as explanatory events. Like Susan Sleeper-Smith and, indeed, Richard White, I argue that other forces—in this case changes in ecosystems and the land-grabbing goals of treaty negotiations were the critical elements of an American conquest that was not quite complete even at the end of the century.

Significance?

This project intervenes in two fields of history: Native American history and environmental history. The arguments outlined above are novel in their focus on Indigenous land-use practices and colonial techniques of dividing the world into binaries that worked to undermine American Indian beliefs and lifeways. In a larger methodological sense, "Domesticating the Country" contends that we can best understand colonial encounters in the Great Lakes and upper Ohio Valley if we view humans as an integral part of the environments on which they depend. In short, what we call "nature" is always already internal to any social relations. The ways different human groups live in their landscapes and the meanings they draw from their daily interactions (which recursively shape future interactions with landscapes) actually produce the sociopolitical power that historians study. In the chapters to follow, I will have more to say about this approach, for it is best discussed through the analysis of specific historical events and dynamics.

Ultimately, this study suggests that Euro-American power was incredibly fragile up until the nineteenth century. By contrast, Black Swamp and upper Ohio Valley communities

effectively enacted territorial claims even in the face of a colonial onslaught. Indigenous communities created life-worlds that, at first glance, looked tenuous to outsiders. Land claims, village sites, food supplies, and other elements essential to human survival seemed to shift seasonally. Yet, territorial mobility and flexibility helped to constitute Indigenous power during a period of colonial encroachment.

I argue that we cannot fully understand the conflict between Indigenous peoples and French or British or United States military forces and settler colonists without appreciating the centrality of nonhuman lifeforms and landscapes to these struggles. The ways in which Natives and newcomers interacted with their environments to eke out a subsistence or to accumulate territorial power mattered a great deal to the outcome of both armed conflict and diplomacy. In short, this history of the Black Swamp's human inhabitants from deep history through the end of the eighteenth century attends closely to the fact that humans are not merely organisms but, as the anthropologist Tim Ingold contends, "organisms-in-their-environments."[19] Our social formations, belief systems, war-making activities, legal concepts, and political institutions always already contain and are contained by the nonhuman entities and forces that we often refer to as "the environment" or "nature."[20] My approach, then, is a bit unwieldy and two-fold. I contend that no ontological division exists between "nature" and "society." At the same time, I schematically trace the ways in which colonial legal, cultural, and governmental apparatuses have sought to arrange the world in such a way that the nature-society (or savage-civilized)

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[19] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2-3.

[20] Timothy J. LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 124-136; Linda Nash, "Furthering the Environmental Turn," *Journal of American History* 100, no. 1 (June 2013): 131-135.

binary appears to be part of a natural order of things.[21] This colonial domestication of the world itself into binary categories dramatically butted up against Indigenous lifeways in the Black Swamp region, and the wetland itself played an important role in the outcome of this conflict.

Ultimately, this study of Native American territoriality and imperial occupation in one particular bioregion highlights the materiality and durability of Indigenous power as well as the profound socioecological consequences of colonialism. We live with those consequences today.

[21] Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-34.

CHAPTER II:
BECOMING NATIVE TO THIS PLACE

Settlement over the Long Durée

There was a time, perhaps 15,000 years ago, when no human had set foot on the lands that would become the Black Swamp. Eventually, however, migrating groups of hunter-gatherers settled Lake Erie's western basin. Dozens of generations of human settlers came to know the churning waters of the lake, the crashing rapids of the Maumee River, the safe harbor of Sandusky Bay, patchwork prairieland, and the dark, expansive swamp forest ribbed with low-rising glacial moraines. Those inhabitants—diverse peoples about whom we often know frustratingly little—were, like all living things, continually entangled in a dense web of biophysical and affective connections as they coaxed a subsistence out of their environment. Through the very art of living on the land and learning from the practical teachings of their elders, generations of humans became native to the Black Swamp. This chapter schematically outlines those connections between peoples and their home in Lake Erie's western basin from deep history to the beginning of the eighteenth century in the common era.

Although this project is first and foremost a study of how Indigenous peoples occupied and made use of the Black Swamp during the eighteenth-century onslaught of Euro-American colonialism , this chapter's account of the geological, ecological, and human history of the region up through the seventeenth century illuminates four interrelated conceptual points. First, scholars committed to writing human histories can very easily miss the scope and importance of changes occurring either over staggeringly long periods of time or on scales much larger or smaller than our anthropocentric optics tend to permit. Historians can no longer ignore the truly longue durée histories studied by geologists, atmospheric chemists, ecologists, or evolutionary

biologists as we confront the unfolding climate crisis, alarming rates of biodiversity loss, human alteration of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and a cornucopia of chemical pollutants developed and released by our species over the past century.[1]

Second, the absence of human beings from parts of this history suggests not only that we ought to pay attention to varying scales of temporal and spatial analysis, but also that we should consider the multiple forms of life and nonliving forces that make history. For instance, the earth-shaping power of glaciers and millennia of species succession created the biologically productive Black Swamp ecosystem. When Native bands eventually settled at the wetland edges, they carved out niches in their search for shelter, fish, game, forage, and arable land. Human occupation would have been unimaginable without the earlier colonizing work of hardy grasses, trees, soil microbes, and animals. Along with Lake Erie's violent storms, the nearly impassable swamp itself provided a buttress for human inhabitants against enemy war parties or encroaching settlers. Geographical features and nonhuman organisms were not incidental to the lives of the peoples living around the Black Swamp. It is impossible to accurately account for change over time without reference to the nonhuman entities and heterogeneous relationships constituting our world and facilitating action in it.[2]

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[1] On the imbrication of geological, evolutionary, and human-centered "social" scales, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 197-222; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Anthropocene Time," *History and Theory* 57, no. 1 (March 2018): 5-32; Brett Walker, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 67-69. For an overview of the planetary boundaries humans now threaten to transgress, see Johan Rockström, et al., "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Ecology and Society* 14, no. 2 (2009): 32; and Will Steffen, et al., "Planetary Boundaries: Guiding Human Development on a Changing Planet," *Science* Feb. 13, 2015, vol. 347, no. 6223: 1259855.

[2] Recent scholarship focusing on animals, plants, and microbes as actors—or "actants"— has spurred considerable effort in the humanities and social sciences to examine the role of nonhuman, and often nonliving, "agents" in the making of history. In this context, scholars in several fields have sought to disentangle the concept of "agency" from that of "intentionality." For discussions of agency as the uncertain outcome of relationships and interactions (or "assemblages" in the popular academic parlance), see esp. Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002), 19-53; Linda Nash, "The Agency of

Third, in attempting to narrate a timespan encompassing "prehistory" and "history," I seek to begin eroding the nature-culture binary residing at the heart of the colonial logics and practices discussed later in this study. For in scholarly praxis, the division between "prehistory" and "history" crystalizes in the distinct fields of archaeology and history. This division itself is rooted in what is often called Cartesian Dualism—the apparent separation of "mind" from "matter." While archaeologists investigate a variety of materials from the past, historians tend to work chiefly with written texts, which we often take to be representations of human intentionality or windows into a somehow disembodied motor of historical action known as "the mind." The fact that Indigenous Americans passed on knowledge through media other than writing has meant that historians often uncritically divide the past into "prehistory," meaning the long period of time occurring before the arrival of European writing technologies and the incorporation of American peoples into the universalizing story of Europe, and "history," which refers to the period since the arrival of Europeans that supposedly brought linear time, culture, dynamism and contingency, and the intentional self-making practices necessary for the narration of past events. In effect, differences in researchers' sources, materials, and methods along with a set of teleological assumptions about how different social formations and their self-reflective practices fit on a sliding scale of civilizational development shape this way of periodizing the past.[3]

Nature or the Nature of Agency," *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (2005): 67-69; and Timothy J. LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[3] For Cartestian Dualism, see René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Third Ed., trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993 [1641]), 8-9, 47-59. My thinking here has been influenced by Daniel Lord Smail and Andrew Shryock, "History and the 'Pre'," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 3 (June 2013): 707-737; Bruce Trigger, "American Archaeology as Native History: A Review Essay," *William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (July 1983): 413-452; Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 78-85; Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-34; LeCain, *Matter of History*, 44; James D. Rice, *Nature and History in the Potomac Country from Hunter-Gatherers to the Age of Jefferson* (Baltimore,

Finally, attending to the deep history of the Black Swamp region helps to illuminate how different human societies formed alliances with "nature" and came to manipulate or even partially control *some* organisms and ecosystems. By appreciating the strategies human communities devised to domesticate their lands and to accumulate and deploy power prior to sustained European contact, we can better assess the effects of colonialism and the ecological stakes involved in the struggles to control the Black Swamp and the Great Lakes as a whole since the seventeenth century.[4]

Not surprisingly, this last point accounts for the bulk of my analysis in this chapter. Native communities, I argue, created a *domesticated* landscape. The Black Swamp was not a marshy wilderness, but rather a managed environment in which people learned to live within

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MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 11; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Notable recent examples of historians blurring archaeology and history to illuminate the significance of the deep past and to decenter European colonial categories include Rice, *Nature and History in the Potomac Country*; and Thomas G. Andrews, *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[4] This argument is rooted in the notion that domestication practices forged alliances, allowing different human communities to harness nonhuman forces and energies in service of settlement and landscape transformation. On domestication, see, for example, the practices through which agriculturalists and scientists redirect the energies, desires, and even intentions of nonhuman (and human) others. Both actor-network theory (ANT) and its less cybernetically inflected successor projects in science studies and anthropology are fundamentally concerned with how domestication/translation practices succeed or fail to capture the energies of others. See for example the foundational work of ANT: Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay," in *Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 196-233.

In the field of history, studies tracing the roots of sociopolitical power through the human manipulation of nonhuman organisms, nonliving matter, and biophysical processes have their roots in Marxian analysis but became more prominent in historical scholarship since the initial flourishing of environmental history in the 1970s and the necessary rejection of the methodological individualism that defined both liberal and Marxist histories. For a useful survey of the literature and a cogent material analysis of power, see Edmund Russell, et al., "The Nature of Power: Synthesizing the History of Technology and Environmental History," *Technology and Culture* 52, no. 2 (2011): 246-259. Influential studies that examine the emergence of power out of human-nonhuman alliances or forms of appropriation in diverse contexts include Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 2010): 173-208; Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); and Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso, 2011).

certain ecological constraints while exerting influence or control over select lands and lifeforms. If we pause to appreciate the fact that Indigenous groups had settled (i.e., reconciled themselves to) the lands they inhabited, planted, and hunted on, then we can make three further points. First, their subsistence strategies were effective. The time-consuming process of learning how to live in an ecosystem meant that inhabitants of the Lake Erie basin became flexible, opportunistic hunters, foragers, and farmers. Second, because Native peoples developed subsistence strategies and lifeways over generations of practical engagement with the world, their knowledge and skills would make it difficult for Europeans and Euro-Americans to defeat them militarily or to uproot them from homelands, points I emphasize in chapters two and three of this study. By the same token, the upheavals of the Iroquois Wars in the second half of the seventeenth century likely caused significant social distress as Black Swamp inhabitants (and residents of the Ohio Country more broadly) found themselves pushed out of familiar landscapes. Consequently, their connections to regular sources of spiritual and corporeal nourishment were severed. Third, while we might be inclined to imagine that a truly domesticated country features permanent villages and a heavy reliance on agriculture, I contend that both farming and sedentism arrived long after inhabitants had created a domesticated landscape through the practices of fishing, hunting, foraging, and seasonal mobility. To appreciate this mobility and flexibility as the purposeful mode of existence that it was, we need to partially dismantle conventional definitions of domestication and work toward a new understanding of how different peoples have domesticated—familiarized, laid claim to, and otherwise reconciled themselves with—their environments.[5]

[5] The historical literature detailing Indigenous land-use practices is vast. But see, for example, William Cronon's influential *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). For a useful synthesis detailing Native and colonial land use patterns and colonial encounters, see

Ultimately, this excursion into prehistory offers a new perspective on the more familiar seventeenth- and eighteenth-century historical narratives of the Lake Erie Basin, the Ohio Country, and the Great Lakes region. By incorporating the fragmentary archaeological and historical environmental evidence, this chapter offers a glimpse into the dynamic life-worlds of Black Swamp inhabitants before the arrival of Europeans. With the help of scholars working on the histories of semi-sedentary and nomadic peoples (and nonhuman animals) in different contexts, I seek to reimagine the Black Swamp and its surrounding river valleys as a fully domesticated landscape rather than a marshy wilderness or wasteland. Both social stability and political-military power emerged from Indigenous community members' sustained interactions with their environments. In order to fully make sense of the impact of the Iroquois Wars on displaced Great Lakes peoples in the late seventeenth century or the effectiveness of Indigenous anticolonial resistance in the second half of the eighteenth century or the erosion of Native power in the final decades of that century, we must appreciate the longer struggles of humans to become native to the verdant, capricious lands and waters of Lake Erie's vast Black Swamp.

Deep History

The history of the Black Swamp and its inhabitants begins during the final centuries of the Pleistocene Epoch as global temperatures slowly warmed and glaciers in the Northern Hemisphere retreated. The Laurentide ice sheet, covering much of present-day Canada and the North Central United States, started to melt some 17,000 years ago, exposing a northern North

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Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

American continent profoundly transformed from the previous interglacial topography.[6] South of the eastern portion of the Canadian Shield, a cold, flat, poorly drained landscape emerged. Ancient river valleys and lowlands collected glacial melt, forming large lakes that came to define the region's ecosystems. The shorelines of these lakes changed significantly as the ice sheet retreated, advanced, and retreated again over several millennia. The southernmost and shallowest body of water, known to geologists as Lake Maumee, encompassed present-day Lake Erie and the vast swamp. During the first two thousand years of the glacier's northward retreat, ice melt made the waters of Lake Maumee about fifty feet higher than today. The lake drained into the Mississippi via a lowland corridor through present-day Ohio and Indiana.[7]

Around 13,000 years ago, the ice sheet briefly advanced once again during a nearly two-millennia cooling period known as the Younger Dryas. This glacial advance forced Lake Maumee against the rocky moraine at what is now Fort Wayne, Indiana. Eventually, the moraine broke apart, sending a violent torrent of water cascading through a one- to two-mile-wide channel to the Wabash River and causing lake levels to drop by twenty feet or more. Over the next millennium, continued glacial melt saw the lake rise once again, especially as water began flowing into the Erie basin from Lake Algonquin, the proglacial lake encompassing much of Lakes Huron, Superior, and Michigan.[8]

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[6] For a concise description of the geological history of the Great Lakes going much farther back to the Precambrian supereon, see William Ashworth, *The Late Great Lakes: An Environmental History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 15-20. For a description of the Black Swamp region's pre-glacial geological features, see Karl Ver Steeg, "The Preglacial Physiography of Western Ohio," *Science* 84, no. 2174 (August 1936): 201-202.

[7] John L. Riley, *The Once and Future Great Lakes Country: An Ecological History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 5.

[8] Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, 6; Michael C. Hansen, "The History of Lake Erie," *Ohio Geology Newsletter* (Fall 1989): 1-6. The end of the Younger Dryas marked the beginning of the Holocene.

As the Younger Dryas came to an end and average temperatures climbed, the lower Great Lakes transformed dramatically. Glacial retreat exposed a new northern outlet for Lake Algonquin (known as the North Bay Outlet), stopping the flow of water into the Erie basin. Meanwhile, a new opening over the Niagara Escarpment allowed Lake Erie to drain into proto-Lake Ontario. Over several centuries, Lake Ontario found a succession of outlets through present-day New York state before eventually draining into the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence River. With inflow from Lake Algonquin halted, Lake Erie's water levels dropped until it was reduced to two small, possibly connected, bodies of water in the central and eastern basins.[9] Much of the western basin and the clay-richsoils of the Black Swamp were now exposed for the first time. The glacier had deposited and compacted the clay till to create a nearly flat lake plain over the limestone and shale bedrock. But glacial moraines and sandy beach ridges, the latter created as water levels receded, introduced a series of gentle rises south of the shoreline for forty or fifty miles.[10]

About 7,500 years before present, as temperatures continued to warm, the portion of Earth's crust previously compressed by the weight of the glaciers rebounded. This isostatic rebound slowly raised the elevation of Lake Algonquin's North Bay Outlet, trapping water and allowing modern lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron to form. As water levels rose over the next two millennia, the outlet through the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, and the Detroit River to Lake Erie reopened. The lake reached its current approximate water level roughly 4,000 years

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[9] Charles E. Herdendorf, "Research Overview: Holocene Development of Lake Erie," *The Ohio Journal of Science* 112, no. 2 (2013): 24-36; Troy L. Holcombe, et al., "Revised Lake Erie Postglacial Lake Level History Based on New Detailed Bathymetry," *Journal of Great Lakes Research* 29, no. 4 (2003): 681-704.

[10] State of Ohio, Department of Natural Resources, "Physiographic Regions of Ohio," https://geosurvey.ohiodnr.gov/portals/geosurvey/PDFs/Misc_State_Maps&Pubs/physio.pdf (accessed March 12, 2019).

ago, although the water continued to rise slowly for a few millennia thereafter.[11] To its southwest, the extensive wetland between the slowly emerging Maumee Bay and the Sandusky River remained partially inundated and harbored diverse flora and fauna.

Hearty plants such as grasses, sedges, and juniper were among the first vegetation to claim the post-glacial landscape of the lower Great Lakes. Establishing themselves in lowlands or along shorelines, they began the long process of primary succession, boldly terraforming a seemingly barren world. As they lived, died, and decayed, these first colonists made possible the successive waves of nonhuman and human settlers who would plant themselves in the region over the next several millennia.

Between about 10,000 and 8,000 years before present, pine forests emerged, flourished, and declined as temperatures continued to rise. By no later than 8,000 years ago, deciduous forests took root in low lying areas, including the littoral zone of proto-Lake Erie. Beech forests dominated the shoreline, and an extensive elm-ash swamp forest eventually grew further inland. Slowly migrating from warmer regions like the Carolinas, these tree species and their mycorrhizal partners opportunistically colonized the rich wetland with the help of seed-dispersing deer, rodents, birds, and winds.[12] During the past three millennia, the region saw a

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[11] Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, 11; Herdendorf, "Research Overview"; David M. Stothers and Timothy J. Abel, "Vanished Beneath the Waves: The Lost History and Prehistory of Southwestern Lake Erie Coastal Marshes," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 29 (2001): 19-46.

[12] Mycorrhizae are fungi that develop symbiotically along the root structures of vascular host plants. Through mycorrhizal networks, individual trees within forest communities can communicate with one another and share water and nutrients. Popular science articles have cheekily labeled this communication network the "wood-wide web." At one time, biologists believed that wetlands were home to few arbuscular mycorrhizae due to the nearly anaerobic conditions present in many marshes. However, studies conducted in the past two decades have revealed that mycorrhizae do in fact play an important role in facilitating communication and the transfer of nutrients between individual trees in wetland regions. When I describe trees as "opportunistic" or "colonizers," this is not merely an anthropomorphic flourish. As scholars following actor-network theory have long understood, a mode of analysis that treats nonhuman organisms as capable of complex, coordinated action more accurately reflects (and reproduces) contemporary scientific understandings of plant and fungal life. On mycorrhizae see a study conducted during the late 1990s in northern Indiana marshes not far from the former Black Swamp: Candice R. Bauer, et al., "Mycorrhizal Colonization across Hydrologic Gradients in Restored and Reference Freshwater

sharp increase in oak, hickory, walnut, sycamore, maple, and cottonwood.[13] Varieties of maple and some red oaks like the pin oak proved adaptable to both dry, sandy ridges and the clayey lowlands of the Black Swamp. However, other hardwoods such as the white oak, sycamore, and cottonwood were far less shade tolerant and required significant openings in the forest canopy to establish themselves. Generally, such openings were provided by the ridges and dunes left by Lake Maumee's retreating shoreline and, occasionally, by the destruction caused by windstorms or tornados. Over hundreds of years, these shade intolerant trees grew in prairie openings, meadows, and among the older elm-ash forest complex.[14]

For a few thousand years until the middle of the nineteenth century C.E., this densely covered forestscape interspersed with wet prairies, meadows, and oak savannas remained essentially constant.[15] This stability does not, however, signify stasis. With lifespans of 200 years or less, elm and ash trees lived and died over some 40 generations in eight millennia. Likewise,

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Wetlands," *Wetlands* 23, no. 4 (2003): 961-968. The authors conclude that "it is important to consider AM [arbuscular mycorrhizal] fungi as a potentially important component of wetland ecosystems influencing plant community structure and ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling" (967). For a popular analysis of the communication networks among trees, see Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How the Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World* (Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books, 2016).

[13] For pollen data on vegetation succession, see Thompson Webb III, Patrick J. Bartlein, Sandy P. Harrison, and Katherine H. Anderson, "Vegetation, Lake Levels, and Climate in Eastern North America for the Past 18,000 Years," in *Global Climates Since the Last Glacial Maximum*, ed. H.E. Wright, Jr., et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 449-450; and Brian C. Reeder and Wendy R. Eisner, "Holocene Biogeochemical and Pollen History of a Lake Erie, Ohio, Coastal Wetland," *Ohio Journal of Science* 94, no. 4 (Sept. 1994): 87-93.

[14] On the wetland soil and forest composition, see Jane L. Forsyth, "A Geologist Looks at the Natural Vegetation Map of Ohio," *Ohio Journal of Science* 70, no. 3 (May 1970): 180-191. Ecologists have difficulty outlining the composition and dynamics of the Black Swamp since few remnants exist today. Accounts by early Euro-American settlers have proven useful, as have comparisons with other similar ecosystems. The best information, though, comes from research conducted in the few remaining vestiges of the swamp forest. Chief among these is Goll Woods in Fulton County, Ohio. See Ralph E. J. Boerner and Do-Soon Cho, "Structure and Composition of Goll Woods, an Old-Growth Forest Remnant in Northwestern Ohio," *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club* 114, no. 2 (April-June 1987): 173-179. For a useful, though historically vague, discussion of species succession in the Black Swamp, see Homer C. Sampson, "Succession in the Swamp Forest Formation in Northern Ohio," *The Ohio Journal of Science* 35, no. 2 (1930): 340-357.

[15] Lawrence G. Brewer and John L. Vankat, "Description of Vegetation of the Oak Openings of Northwestern Ohio at the Time of Euro-American Settlement," *Ohio Journal of Science* 104, no. 4 (2004): 76-85; Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, 11-12.

the trees of the oak openings completed their lifecycles in as few as 70-100 years (cottonwood) or as many as 500 years (white oak). From a geological perspective, the forest complex experienced relatively rapid changes in its organismic composition even as the regional ecosystem maintained some degree of overall constancy.[16]

During the late glacial stage, megafauna, including mastodons, giant sloths, dire wolves, long-horned bison, and short-faced bears, traversed the region. These and other species did not survive the Pleistocene extinction. Archaeologists and evolutionary biologists continue to debate the causes of the die-off, though it appears the culprit may have been some combination of normal climate change caused by the interglacial emergence of continental climate zones; the Younger Dryas, which may have resulted from a comet impact or changing Atlantic Ocean circulation patterns; overhunting by early human settlers; or some kind of hyperdisease spread by these migrating peoples. While there is still no scientific consensus, the fossil record is clear that ecological succession occurred quickly during the first few millennia of the Holocene Epoch.[17]

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[16] "Stability" is, as I suggest, a relative term. The evolutionary synthesis after Darwin typically viewed natural selection as a process occurring slowly over very long periods of time—tens or hundreds of thousands of years. Recent research indicates that phenotypic changes in species occur over much shorter periods, especially in times of rapid climate change or ecosystem transformation. Early ecological science likewise assumed that entire ecosystems arrive at stable "climax communities" through a long, steady process of species succession. Over the past several decades, ecologists' increased understanding of the dynamic and nonlinear relationships that comprise ecosystems and their greater attention to history have unsettled, though not overturned, the notion of ecological stability. For a brief overview of developments in evolutionary biology, see, for example, S.P. Carroll, et al., "Evolution on Ecological Time-Scales," *Functional Ecology* 21, no. 3 (2007): 387-393. For an overview from a historian, see LeCain, *Matter of History*, 97-100. On the history of ecological science, see Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and John Kricher, *The Balance of Nature: Ecology's Enduring Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[17] Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, 9-11. Riley offers a concise account of the possible causes of the extinction event and the debates surrounding each. For those who remain convinced that overhunting by Amerindians played a significant role, some scholars have posited that the Pleistocene extinction event merely kicked off an ongoing global extinction, chiefly caused by humans, that continues to this day. See, for example, Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014); and Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (New York: OR Books, 2016). Other scholars contend that the five previous global extinction events recorded in the fossil record dwarf the Pleistocene-Holocene-Anthropocene extinctions by several orders of magnitude. Consequently, they argue that we are (fortunately) not *yet* in the midst of such a catastrophic global die-off, though we appear to be headed for one. For an overview of this argument, see Peter Brannen, *The Ends of the World: Volcanic Apocalypses, Lethal Oceans, and Our Quest to Understand Earth's Past Mass*

The Pleistocene extinctions and warmer climate opened niches for other animals. American bison, elk, deer, brown bears, wolves, bobcats, and cougars occupied the changing post-glacial landscape. The smaller of these species—the deer, wolves, and big cats—made their homes in the swamp forest, while bison and elk could be found in oak openings, meadows, and prairies.[18] Bears traversed the region, but probably stayed close to the major waterways. Rodents such as meadow voles, squirrels, beavers, muskrats, mink, raccoons, and skunks became well established as the climate warmed. Mammalian inhabitants relied on the acorns, walnuts, wetland plants, aquatic life, or smaller animals found in abundance throughout the fertile region. Small, nonpoisonous reptiles and amphibians eventually settled in the Black Swamp, as did the venomous Eastern Massasauga rattlesnake. Wild turkeys and passenger pigeons settled throughout the Great Lakes, eventually becoming regular food sources for human communities. Wetlands like the Black Swamp constituted the primary habitat for waterfowl. Several species of heron, the belted kingfisher, the great egret, and the mallard could all be found nesting in the Lake Erie littoral and further inland during warmer months. Migratory animals arrived in the wetland seeking food, shelter, and breeding opportunities as the seasons changed. From Lake Erie, walleye, white bass, and giant sturgeon swam up the Maumee and Sandusky to spawn each

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Extinctions (New York: Ecco, 2017). See also the sobering May 2019 Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report indicating that approximately one million species face extinction in the coming decades if human production and consumption patterns are not significantly transformed: Sandra Díaz, et al., *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services—unedited advance version*, https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/summary_for_policymakers_ipbes_global_assessment.pdf (accessed May 6, 2019).

[18] Bison probably played only a small role in the subsistence economy of the Black Swamp region. While they certainly lived in the prairies and grasslands dotting the region, fish and smaller game like deer were consumed with far greater regularity. See Jonathan E. Bowen, "The Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1992), 39. For an overview of the long relationship between human inhabitants and bison in the upper Ohio Valley (present-day southern Ohio and Kentucky), see John A. Jackle, "The American Bison and the Human Occupance of the Ohio Valley," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 112, no. 4 (August 1968): 299-305.

spring, while the lake's western basin and much of the swamp became a major stopover for Canada geese and other birds traveling along the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways.[19] The Black Swamp became a locus of biodiversity as new species migrated to the Great Lakes and constructed niches for themselves.

Humans settled in the region sometime during the late glacial period and have been present with only brief interruptions since. Nomadic peoples followed large game south of Lake Maumee as early as 15,000 years ago. Their descendants and later migrants from the west and south resided in the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley consistently after about 8000 B.C.E.[20] We know little about these progenitors or their dozens of generations of descendants until about 700 B.C.E., at which point archaeological evidence begins to illuminate a little bit about the settlement patterns of Early Woodland Period (1000-200 B.C.E) societies.

Some of these Early Woodland peoples formed concentrated semi-permanent settlements in areas surrounding the Black Swamp, particularly along the Vermilion and Huron rivers to the east. Within the swamp and throughout the Maumee Valley, it appears that the region's many patrilocal bands were more dispersed and seasonally mobile with family units comprising the most important level of social organization.[21] At the edges of the wetland, the mobile communities congregated in resource-rich areas to fish, hunt, perform annual rituals, and bury the dead.[22] All the way through the eighteenth century C.E., the region's Native communities

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[19] Ohio Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Management, *Ohio Coastal Atlas*, Second Ed. (Sandusky, OH: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 2007), 120-134.

[20] Stothers and Abel, "Vanished Beneath the Waves," 22.

[21] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 15-16.

[22] Stothers and Abel, "Vanished Beneath the Waves," 22-24.

generally appear to have engaged in regularized semi-nomadic land use practices, though, as we will see, many of those practices changed in important ways over time.

The inhabitants of this region lived in the midst of extensive networks of trade and cultural exchange. Evidence from burial practices and pottery fragments at Early Woodland townsites reveals that commercial, diplomatic, or kinship relations linked most societies of Northeast and Northcentral North America in what archaeologists refer to as the Meadowood Interaction Sphere. By the Middle Woodland Period (200 B.C.E.-500 C.E.), a so-called Hopewell Interaction Sphere, centered on the Ohio Valley and the well-known Hopewell peoples, stretched as far as the Rocky Mountains to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, and extended from the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast. The trade relationships constituting the Hopewell Interaction Sphere appear to have influenced the social forms, technologies, and mortuary practices of most cultures contained within this zone of exchange.

Between the Early and Middle Woodland periods, Lake Erie's water levels slowly rose and flooded many of the older coastal villages and encampments. Residents moved away from the littoral marshlands to glacial ridges and oak openings further inland.[23] They likely used these dry areas for seasonal hunting and foraging while mostly avoiding the wet prairies and low-lying forests. So, while some Middle Woodland societies to the south constructed permanent villages and earthworks and practiced sedentism (e.g. the Hopewell tradition), the Iroquoian peoples of western Lake Erie continued to live in mobile communities. They settled along river bottoms during the summer months and relied heavily on fishing and the cultivation of varieties of

[23] Ibid., 26.

squash, sunflowers, and other native plants before dispersing to upland hunting grounds for the winters.[24]

Researchers have difficulty reconstructing the subsistence practices and social forms of western basin peoples until midway through the Late Woodland Period (500-1000 C.E.), thanks largely to inhabitants' extensive (as opposed to intensive) land tenure and mobile village sites as well as the loss of archaeological evidence from coastal flooding and erosion.[25] The relatively intact Late Woodland village sites indicate that by the middle of the period western Lake Erie peoples lived in semi-permanent communities during the growing season. Here, they engaged in both small-scale agriculture and intensive fishing and foraging, including clam harvesting, along the edges of the wetland. Inhabitants systematically exploited the abundance of the prairie-forest and land-water margins of the Black Swamp. Indeed, they probably chose to build communities along the ecological transition zone between swamp forests and wet prairies for the nutritional stability that could be quickly obtained year-round from these diverse ecosystems.[26]

One small Late Woodland village, known as the Libben Site, features a large cemetery and appears to have been continuously occupied between the eighth and eleventh centuries. With over 1,300 complete burials recovered, the site reveals much about general subsistence,

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[24] David S. Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," in *Societies in Eclipse: Archaeology of the Eastern Woodlands Indians, A.D. 1400-1700*, ed. David S. Brose, C. Wesley Cowan, and Robert C. Mainfort Jr. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 51; Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country*, 14.

[25] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 1; Stothers and Abel, "Vanished Beneath the Waves."

[26] Stothers and Abel, "Vanished Beneath the Waves," 31. Ecotones—transitional zones between two biomes—were important regions of use and exploitation for many Indigenous communities. I owe my thinking about the political ecology of the Black Swamp as an edge effect or ecotone region to Robert Michael Morrissey, "The Power of the Ecotone: Bison, Slavery, and the Rise and Fall of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia," *Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (December 2015): 667-692.

mortality, and burial practices in the region.[27] The village was comfortably situated on the north side of the lower Portage River about four miles from the river's mouth (outside present Port Clinton, Ohio) and bordering the coastal marshland. The wetland-facing side of the two-acre village featured palisades, while a cemetery occupied the center of the village.[28] The 150 or so permanent inhabitants took full advantage of the location, occasionally hunting deer and migratory birds and regularly trapping muskrats, harvesting shellfish, and using weirs to trap and kill fish.[29] Villagers also relied on local fruits and nuts like raspberries, grapes, hackberries, acorns, and hickory nuts, as well as wetland plants like dock and smartweed.[30] In short, Libben's location provided residents with a variety of readily available food sources.

Archaeological analyses have uncovered virtually no concrete evidence of violence within the community or between Libben residents and neighboring villages.[31] While traumatic deaths appear to have been uncommon, limb fractures incurred during daily activities were frequent. The fact that broken bones healed properly indicates that the villagers were probably sedentary for relatively long periods of time, that the community cared for those who had been incapacitated, and that caregivers knew how to immobilize breaks to ensure correct alignment as the bones healed.[32] The location of the mortuary site itself provides further evidence of the

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[27] Richard S. Meindl, Robert P. Mensforth, and C. Owen Lovejoy, "The Libben Site: A Hunting, fishing, and Gathering Village from the Eastern Late Woodlands of North America. Analysis and Implications for Palaeodemography and Human Origins," in *Recent Advances in Palaeodemography: Data, Techniques, Patterns*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bocquet-Appel (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2008), 259-275.

[28] Ibid., 261.

[29] Ibid., 260; Thomas R. Pigott, "An Introduction to the Libben Site," *Ohio Archaeologist* 61, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 51.

[30] Pigott, "Introduction to the Libben Site," 52.

[31] Meindl, Mensforth, and Lovejoy, "Libben Site," 261.

[32] Ibid., 262.

village's relatively democratic social fabric. Community members buried the dead facing the same direction and left the bodies intact. The deceased were not segregated within the cemetery by sex or age, nor were there any apparent distinctions in social status at burial. According to archaeologists Richard Meindl, Robert Mensforth, and Owen Lovejoy, "Libben was an egalitarian society, and death and burial were important rites of passage for all of its members."[33]

The prominence of the mortuary site at the village center and the fact that it was not physically set apart from living space also suggests that residents understood that "there was continuity from life to death."[34] Just as land and water blended together in the Lake Erie marshes, inhabitants appear to have understood life to flow seamlessly and purposefully into death—a gentle transition rather than the crossing of a dangerous boundary. The very experience of living in the littoral wetland might have produced the imagery and metaphors from which inhabitants developed their understanding of the relationship between life and death.[35]

The population of Libben grew slowly. As the central location of the burial site suggests, death occupied a central place in daily life. In fact, average lifespans hovered around 30 years of age. Diseases like syphilis along with relatively high infant mortality--the latter perhaps caused by seasonably variable supplies of food --regularly plagued the community.[36] Nevertheless, the

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[33] Ibid., 263. Meindl, Mensforth, and Lovejoy emphasize that "Libben was an egalitarian society, and death and burial were important rites of passage for all of its members."

[34] Ibid., 261.

[35] This argument follows important moves in the social and natural sciences to attend closely to the material composition of cultural and linguistic forms, including memory and belief. Philosopher/cognitive scientists Andy Clark and David Chalmers, advancing what they have termed the "extended mind hypothesis," argue that "beliefs can be constituted partly by features of the environment…." See Clark and Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (January 1998): 7-19 (quote on 14). See also Eduardo Kohn's pathbreaking study of the semiosis of other-than-human entities in *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 27-68.

[36] Meindl, Mensforth, and Lovejoy, "Libben Site," 271. Earlier analysis by Lovejoy, Meindl, and others speculated that interpersonal or intergroup violence between males may have accounted for the low life expectancy. Lacking concrete evidence from analyzed remains, scholars have abandoned this hypothesis. See C. Owen Lovejoy,

population may have doubled every 30 years, with movement away from the village providing a safety valve against the socioecological stresses of demographic concentration.[37]

Like the region's other living organisms, human communities reconciled their needs and ambitions with a living world populated by diverse species and shaped by capricious seasons, a changing climate, and an expansive, fecund wetland. Nutrients harvested from the swamp margins nurtured inhabitants—their bodies literally formed and reformed by biomolecules circulating along the food chain. Their knowledge, perception, intentions, and practices likewise developed out of unceasing interactions within environments. In these ways, generations of people *became* native to the Black Swamp.[38]

This brief history of the wetland ecoregion's deeper past highlights the fact that the verdant postglacial landscape emerged because of the complex interplay of a changing climate, the resulting landform-shaping movements of water, and, eventually, the arrival of mostly nonhuman migrants that constructed niches and adapted to regularly changing ecological conditions. Human communities joined other species in flexibly adapting to and reshaping their landscapes. Over generations, these many forces produced the cosmologies and subsistence practices that would come to define Indigenous communities.

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et al., "Paleodemography of the Libben Site, Ottawa County, Ohio," *Science* 198, issue 4314 (Oct. 21, 1977): 291-293.

[37] Meindl, Mensforth, and Lovejoy, "Libben Site," 271.

[38] On indigeneity or nativeness as practice and process, see Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 132-151. See also, Daniel Lewis, "How Hawai'i Forces us to Redefine the Meaning of 'Native,'" *Zocalo Public Square*, July 11, 2018, https://www.zocalopublicsquare.org/2018/07/11/hawaii-forces-us-redefine-meaning-native/ideas/essay/ (accessed April 14, 2019); and Daniel Lewis, *Belonging on an Island: Birds, Extinction, and Evolution in Hawai'i* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 2.

A Domesticated Landscape?

Between the Late Woodland Period and the beginning of sustained contact with Europeans in the seventeenth century, eastern North American societies continued to reshape ecosystems and honor commitments to the other-than-human creatures and spirits from which they gained favor and power.[39] During this period, the peoples of the eastern woodlands adopted more diverse subsistence strategies by partnering with crops like maize and relying more heavily on agriculture. Around the Black Swamp, inhabitants eventually settled in larger, apparently permanent villages.

We might reasonably assume that the spread of maize farming during the first millennium C.E. allowed for the creation of a truly domesticated landscape in which humans confined and controlled in centralized, permanent spaces of settlement and extraction. Indeed, for the peoples of the Great Lakes and northeastern North America, the adoption of maize and the Three Sisters companion planting system almost certainly proved to be the most radical innovation of the Late Woodland Period. The Medieval Climatic Anomaly (or Medieval Warm Period—roughly 950-1250 C.E.) brought warmer temperatures and longer growing seasons to the northern latitudes, which allowed communities throughout the woodlands to begin partnering with (and relying on) squash, beans, and maize—crops that had been domesticated several millennia earlier by Mesoamerican peoples in the subtropical and tropical climates of what is now Mexico and Central America. While some varieties of squash and maize traveled north centuries earlier,

[39] My ongoing discussion has been partly influenced by Daniel Richter's examination of the ways Native North Americans understood, accumulated, and deployed power through kinship ties, economic obligations, and the ability to effectively incorporate resources from outside the community through warfare and diplomacy. See Richter, *Before the Revolution*, 24-30.

beans and flint corn (a fast-growing eight-row variety of maize) did not take root beyond what is now the American Southwest until the warming.[40]

Agriculturalists—generally women—developed a marvelous companion planting scheme. They first planted kernels of maize in a mound of soil. When a stalk reached about six inches in height, the farmers planted beans and squash around it. Soon, the beans began to curl up the growing corn stalks while the vines of the squash grew close to the ground. The broad squash leaves provided protection from pests, shade, moisture retention, and eventually fertilizer as they withered and decayed. Meanwhile, bacteria on the root nodules of the beans synthesized nitrogen and returned it to the soil. Most important, when eaten together, the three foods provided humans with several essential amino acids and vitamins, forming the main pillars of a balanced diet.[41]

Variations of this system developed throughout the eastern woodlands as people and plants adapted to one another and to local soils and climates. The Anishinaabeg (Odawas, Ojibwes, Potawatomis, Mississaugas, Nippisings, Algonquins) of the northern Great Lakes, for example, planted maize and beans together but grew squash separately. An Odawa story explains how this practice came to be. A long time ago, the story begins, Corn stood tall and alone in his garden. Occasionally, he was saddened by the solitude and he sang the song of loneliness. One day, Squash Maiden came to Corn and offered companionship. Corn thanked her and replied, "You are a beautiful plant, but we cannot grow together. You must wander all over the ground while I must stand in one place. Your broad leaves block the sun from the young ones beneath

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[40] Ibid., 15.

[41] Richter, *Before the Revolution*, 13; and Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 55.

you. I grow tall and thin to share the sunlight." Hearing Corn's explanation, Bean approached and planted herself in the earth beside him. Her slender vines embraced Corn, wrapping around and around his stalk. They grew tall together and promised to remain with one another forever.[42]

Passing down this story from one generation to the next, Anishinaabe storytellers ensured that this practical planting scheme would continue year after year through the short northern growing seasons. Generations of listeners may have also reflected on their own interdependence with these crops. Like Corn and Bean, the Anishinaabeg and their crops complemented one another, their fates intertwining as they became familiar with and mutually reliant upon the energies of partner species. So important was the co-domestication of maize, squash, beans, and Native peoples that the plants, their origins, and their relationships came to figure prominently in the oral histories and creation stories of most Late Woodland Period societies, indicating that Indigenous communities fully recognized the degree to which they benefitted from their alliance with these crops.[43]

As transformative as agriculture was to peoples throughout eastern North America, my account so far risks presenting the adoption of maize as both fantastically revolutionary and wholly positive. Indeed, a long-accepted domestication narrative threatens to shape any analysis of the advent of plant or animal husbandry. This narrative contends that humankind's systematic taming of plants and animals—collectively constituting the "Neolithic Revolution"—was a unidirectional process in which people gained control over other species' reproductive cycles in order to develop a reliable and accessible source of food or labor and to selectively breed particular characteristics over generations until those characteristics were reliably passed on from

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[42] "The Union of Corn and Bean," Native Languages, http://www.Native-languages.org/ottawastory.htm (accessed October 18, 2018).

[43] Richter, *Before the Revolution*, 35.

parents to offspring. Through the confinement and control of species in monocrop fields and fenced-in pastures, burgeoning agriculturalists abandoned hunter-gatherer lifeways for a more stable, settled existence, much to everyone's benefit. Domestication thus led directly to sedentism, which in turn facilitated task specialization, material accumulation, and state formation—in short, the development of "civilization." This narrative remains perhaps the most pervasive and under-analyzed teleology in the fields of archaeology and history.[44]

The assumptions at the heart of this narrative are largely incorrect. Agriculture *was* incredibly important, but rather than entirely reshaping material-cultural practices, husbandry quite often fit into familiar multispecies arrangements based on mobile hunting and gathering. Farming was generally incorporated into cycles of seasonal movement. As such, agriculture did not generally lead to sedentism in eastern North America or elsewhere. [45] When sedentarization did occur in Lake Erie's western basin and other places, it appears to have been a desperate strategy to cope with resource scarcity and climatic instability. Nor did plant and animal husbandry create the first legible, managed landscapes or regular multispecies relationships. Native peoples domesticated the countryside through their seasonally mobile subsistence practices prior to and apart from agriculture. And while farming did eventually contribute significant calories to the annual subsistence regime, it became possible only through the

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[44] For more on common domestication narratives and their limitations, see Heather Anne Swanson, Marianne Elisabeth Lien, and Gro B. Ween, "Introduction: Naming the Beast—Exploring the Otherwise," in *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, ed. Heather Ann Swanson, Marianne Elisabeth Lien, and Gro B. Ween (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 5-11; Marianne Elisabeth Lien, *Becoming Salmon: Aquaculture and the Domestication of a Fish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 5-15; Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species," *Environmental Humanities* 1 (2012), 145-146; and Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 32-56.

[45] On the fact that sedentism did not follow domestication, see James C. Scott, "Four Domestications: Fire, Plants, Animals, and… Us," The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, delivered at Harvard University, May 4-6, 2011, https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/s/Scott_11.pdf (accessed May 21, 2019); and James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017). In *Against the Grain*, Scott notes that early states did not develop in wetland regions, as the diversity of food and illegibility of the landscape made it difficult to build state capacity or tax populations (24).

redirection and transformation of women's labor. Before the adoption of regular, large-scale farming, women had likely spent significant time foraging. Much of this kind of labor was probably abandoned in the warmer months as women increasingly devoted (or were forced to devote) their time to planting, weeding, and harvesting fields in and around their villages. In short, women lost a degree of physical mobility as they traded one subsistence regime for another.

Let us briefly explore each of these complications to the conventional domestication narrative. In the eastern woodlands, farming required the material care of nonhuman others and accompanying rituals of respect directed at the worldly and otherworldly beings that brought forth harvests and sustained life itself. The bounty offered by plants and animals and the attention provided by their human partners fostered relationships that Indigenous peoples regarded as roughly reciprocal, rooted in mutual respect and possibly even trust—the same sentiments that informed their understanding of the woodland plants they harvested and the animals they hunted, caught, killed, and revered throughout the year. Conceptually and spiritually, agriculture, foraging, and hunting were analogous activities.[46]

But what of the fact that hunter-gatherers, by definition, go out looking for food while farmers keep their food confined and under control? A close look at fishing, hunting, and foraging in the Black Swamp again suggests more similarities than differences. For instance, inhabitants of the lower Maumee and Sandusky valleys used traps and weirs to capture walleye and bass during spring spawning, a particularly vulnerable time of year for bands running low on

[46] On hunter-gatherers' understanding of killing and care, see Ingold, *Perception of the Environment,* 61-76. For a compelling example and brilliant analysis of these views in the context of Taínos in the Caribbean, see Marcy Norton, "The Chicken or the *Iegue*: Human-Animal Relationships and the Columbian Exchange," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (February 2015): 28-60.

winter provisions.[47] As they confined fish between weirs or corralled them into nets, fishermen from villages like Libben momentarily engaged in what we might regard as a loose form of domestication—redirecting annual reproductive cycles (spawning runs) for their own subsistence. The harvesting of walleye occurred reliably each year, and weirs were not set up to permanently trap fish or to kill all those swimming upstream, for to do so would risk future harvests. So, even though fishermen did not permanently cage the fish or selectively breed them, they did intervene in their lives in much the same way agriculturalists mediated the annual life cycles of their livestock and crops. Fishermen managed and harvested food sources with an eye to the future and with an understanding of the power inherent in these other-than-human beings whose lives they claimed.[48]

Likewise, hunters understood their interactions with prey—from pursuit to the kill—to be part of a regular, structured relationship. To show respect, they may have engaged in ritual purification before a hunt, and they likely obeyed strong social prohibitions against waste. In short, hunting, like farming, was governed by rules for the management of resources.[49] And much like agriculturalists who burned or girdled trees to clear land for fields, hunters transformed the landscape to create spaces specifically for game. Maumee and Sandusky valley inhabitants seem to have burned forest edges in order to extend prairies and oak openings where grazing deer, elk, and bison might congregate and be easily slaughtered. Again, the fact that animals were not strictly confined to these managed landscapes makes little difference if they returned regularly and provided hunting parties with reliable sources of food.

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[47] Meindl, Mensforth, and Lovejoy, "Libben Site," 260; Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 48, 103-104.

[48] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 67-69; Marianne Elisabeth Lien, "Ducks into Houses: Domestication and its Margins," in *Domestication Gone Wild*, 117-137.

[49] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 69.

Foragers also systematically harvested local flora and almost certainly scattered seeds and girdled or burned unwanted trees in order to extend those species that provided them with nuts, fruit, or syrup. In and around the Black Swamp, women and children probably gathered grapes, mulberries, pawpaws, wild strawberries, persimmons, chokeberries, acorns, walnuts, spatterdock, milkweed, cattails, and maple syrup.[50] In all likelihood, these foragers kept track of and retained regionally recognized community rights to the bounty of specific tracts of land. Rather than searching for food in an untamed wilderness, they traveled across a managed landscape that we might liken to a geographically dispersed polyculture farm.

The conventional domestication narrative suggests that agriculture extended human will and the *domus* itself beyond the walls of a dwelling space to encompass specific fields and pastures, plants and animals. In this formulation, sedentism was the inevitable consequence of domestication as the caloric benefits of agriculture encouraged the abandonment of other, supposedly less certain, subsistence practices and yoked people to discrete parcels of land. And yet, sedentism did not accompany the widespread adoption of agriculture in the Black Swamp, nor did it encourage most Amerindian cultural groups to abandon older methods of food procurement. Fishing, hunting, and foraging were effective, flexible modes of subsistence that could relatively easily incorporate agriculture precisely because of their seasonal mobility.

Although these practices existed outside the typical rubric of selective breeding, confinement, and control, they nevertheless ensured village survival, helped to forge social ties among community members collectively engaged in these activities, and probably facilitated

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[50] Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 37-46. Although discussing eighteenth-century Indigenous communities, Sleeper-Smith's reconstruction of subsistence practices in and around the Black Swamp likely holds true for the centuries immediately before European contact as well as the earlier Late Woodland Period. On pawpaws specifically, see Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 69 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 185.

diplomatic relations between regional villages and bands over the sharing of fishing spots, hunting grounds, and forest resources. From this perspective, fishing, hunting, and foraging appear to contain many of the features we typically associate with domestication. Whether we conceptualize these relationships as existing along the fuzzy edges of the *domus* in a state of not-quite-domestication or we rework the notion of domestication itself to include a wider variety of practices and modes of engaging in multispecies relationships, it is clear that these spiritual-subsistence practices helped to produce a domesticated landscape—one in which communities systematically altered plant and animal life (and entire ecosystems) in order to harvest food, fuel, furs, and other resources year after year. A domesticated country thus emerged out of hunting and gathering or other practices that allowed humans to familiarize themselves with their environs.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that agriculture did change Indigenous communities in significant ways. Maize farming introduced a new and important source of food to eastern woodlanders, a new way of engaging with nonhuman others through the practices of control and confinement (spring planting in fields located in or around villages), and a new labor regime that most likely reduced women's mobility. We cannot say with certainty why women became the primary agricultural producers. However, it is likely that long-standing sexual divisions of labor shaped the incorporation of new food sources. While men were responsible for killing animals, women harvested a wide variety of plantstuffs found in woodlands, meadows, and riparian corridors. Plant husbandry may have been understood as an extension of these activities.

It is not difficult to imagine foraging parties striking out into the woods to gather berries, acorns, and cattails, or to tap sugar maples. And although women were also responsible for village-centered activities such as caring for the young or sick, rendering animal carcasses, tanning hides, stitching clothing, and fashioning pottery, foraging almost certainly provided them

with regular opportunities to travel independently and, therefore, to assert a kind of autonomy with their feet. Farming consumed so much time for a significant portion of the year that women throughout eastern North America probably had to all but give up foraging as they became responsible for planting, weeding, and harvesting village fields from late spring to early autumn. In short, the adoption of maize likely placed significant limits on women's mobility.

Did the transformation of a sizable portion of women's work from mobile foraging to settled farming bring with it a predictable loss of political power or decline in social status? On this question, the archaeological record is quiet. In different contexts around the world, as anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has suggested, grain agriculture tied women to the hearth. From this domestication of women inside the home, Tsing argues, states, monotheistic religions, and nationalist movements found one of their most effective technologies of conquest. The confinement of women and, later, children, servants, and slaves within the *domus* proved to be the material and conceptual conditions of possibility for the invention of the head-of-household, a supposedly autonomous political figure whose familial authority provided the basis for fiscal-military sovereignty, church hierarchies, and exclusionary nationalism.[51]

But perhaps the domination of women through plant domestication is not a universal story. Tsing's brief analysis focuses on Eurasia, where settled states and world religions eventually incorporated most peoples. It is possible that because inhabitants of eastern North America remained generally mobile, village-centered practitioners of animistic pantheism, the confinement of women in village fields had little effect on their overall social status or on larger intra-village political dynamics. In the period after European contact, the evidence suggests that Great Lakes women exercised significant economic power and political influence. Historian

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[51] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "Nine Provocations for the Study of Domestication," in *Domestication Gone Wild,* 238-239.

Susan Sleeper-Smith paints a picture of eighteenth-century Indigenous women as the chief engines of village prosperity and power precisely because of their roles as farmers. As they produced food surpluses, women facilitated trade with the French. And because women also processed peltries, they enjoyed a degree of control over the emergent fur trade. Sleeper-Smith concludes that the confinement of American Indian women was not brought on by the large-scale adoption of agriculture, but rather by the later transformations wrought by American patriarchal settler colonialism, capitalism, and scientific agriculture. She writes, "In the last half of the nineteenth century, when Indian women were increasingly confined to the home, their centuries of agrarian expertise was further masked by the cloak of domesticity. Nineteenth-century white farmers used the land to amass individual wealth rather than as a means of ensuring the welfare of the larger community. When agricultural inefficiency became problematic, land grant universities were founded to teach 'scientific farming methods'; Indian women's agrarian expertise was completely ignored." [52] Whether or not Tsing's conclusions about the impact of plant domestication on women apply to the Native communities of the Great Lakes, it seems likely that women agriculturalists garnered power as they controlled key sources of village nourishment, even in the centuries after the adoption of large-scale plant husbandry.

Ultimately, it is important to consider the ways in which the incorporation of new food sources and subsistence patterns may have altered the material and affective associations constituting daily life for at least three reasons. First, such changes underscore the fact that "society" is the result of interactions between human beings and the nonhuman things upon which we depend. At no point can shifting social relations be understood independent of the novel associations we form with other-than-human objects and energies. Second, these changing

[52] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 64-66 (Quote on 65).

relationships augmented power dynamics within Indigenous communities independent of and prior to European colonialism. We should not view the pre-contact history of the Black Swamp, the Ohio Country, or the Great Lakes more broadly as either Edenic or static. Rather, the emergence of a domesticated landscape fostered significant changes in village power dynamics while still allowing common lifeways and migration patterns to remain relatively stable. Third, even the changes brought on by the adoption of agriculture did not necessarily mark a revolutionary transformation for many peoples of the eastern woodlands. Indigenous peoples practiced plant husbandry on a large scale and yet still retained familiar belief systems, seasonal migration patterns, gender relations, and multispecies associations. Because Native lifeways promoted extensive territoriality and flexible subsistence practices rather than population concentration and sedentism, they would prove to be troublesome for Euro-American colonial projects in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, as we will see, sedentism was often a last resort for Indigenous peoples.

Agriculture, Sedentism, and the Domesticated Country

At the edges of the Black Swamp, Native communities during Late Woodland Period only adopted sedentism in response to challenges presented by climate change. Inhabitants first began coalescing in nucleated villages around 1300 C.E., some 300 to 500 years after the adoption of the Three Sisters agricultural complex and just as the Medieval Warm Period came to an end. As growing seasons shortened and animal populations experienced the stress of declining food sources, villagers depended more heavily on intensive deer hunting and maize cultivation than had previous generations.[53] In order to maximize arable land and hunting grounds and to

[53] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 118-119.

minimize resource conflicts, the region's human population may have voluntarily come under more centralized forms of sociopolitical organization.

However, as the climate continued to cool with the onset of the Little Ice Age around the end of the fourteenth century, Maumee Valley peoples appear to have adapted to the altered conditions and eventually dispersed into smaller settlements. Many villages remained along the lower Maumee where much of western Lake Erie's fish returned each spring to spawn.[54] Oak Openings and prairie lands provided space within and at the edges of the swamp forest for additional seasonal or semi-permanent villages.[55] Maize cultivation continued to intensify among western basin inhabitants even during the shortened growing seasons.[56] In this ecologically diverse landscape, residents effectively practiced a mixed economy to meet their nutritional needs.

By the sixteenth century, inhabitants of the lower Maumee and Sandusky valleys once again established a number of possibly permanent villages surrounded by seasonal campsites.[57] Using sticks, bark, and the clayey soil of the swamp, they built wattle and daub houses and high palisades around the villages.[58] Archaeologist David Brose suggests that the colder conditions of the Little Ice Age in conjunction with seasonal precipitation "must have placed a premium on

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[54] Ibid., 120.

[55] Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 54. Brose notes that claims about whether or not any of these villages were permanent are contested. He explains that the "evidence" supporting this argument are the remains of maize, squash, and beans found at multiple sites. Given the histories of Native peoples in the region, the possibility (or likelihood) of early spring flooding in the swamp, and the fact that agriculture could have been performed at seasonal sites, I would suggest that these Wolf Phase (ca. 1250-1450 C.E.) sites were probably semi-permanent or seasonal.

[56] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 120-121; Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 54.

[57] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 122; Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 55.

[58] Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 55-56.

well-drained and sheltered arable soils" in and around the wetland. It is therefore unsurprising, Brose argues, that these relatively large villages sprang up near the most fertile and easily accessible soils. A further sign of upheaval, Brose notes, is archeological evidence suggesting an increase in "traumatic death, nutritional stress, and very limited ritual cannibalism, probably of war captives" across the south shore of Lake Erie.[59] In both the 1300s and the 1500s, the creation of sedentary villages appears to have been a response to rapid climate change—the cooling at the end of the Medieval Warm Period in the first instance and an intensification of the Little Ice Age in the second. The creation of large villages—and sedentarization more generally—was a calculated survival strategy rather than an effort to build states or better control territory.

We can roughly chart the growth of villages from the distribution of pottery fragments. At the end of the Medieval Warm Period, the largest village sites along the lower Sandusky, Maumee, and their tributaries were no more than half an acre (.2 ha) in size. Village sizes remained relatively stable for a time before growing dramatically in the middle of the sixteenth century. By this time, some sites were well over three acres (1.3 ha), and the Indian Hills site sprawled across nearly ten acres (4 ha).[60] This period of most intense villagization roughly coincides with the beginning of the coldest period of the Little Ice Age, suggesting the importance of climate to periods of sedentarization and general demographic displacement.

Flexible food procurement strategies and village consolidation allowed communities stretching from the Detroit River to the Sandusky to flourish between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, despite the climatic upheaval. Noting similarities in subsistence patterns, village structure, and pottery design, archaeologists classify the peoples of southwestern Lake

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[59] Ibid., 61.

[60] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 69.

Erie as part of a single "Sandusky Tradition." Relying on radiocarbon dating of archaeological sites, pottery and tool fragments, early French maps, and Jesuit accounts, archaeologist David Stothers has argued that a discrete Sandusky culture likely originated at Sandusky Bay and pushed westward along the shore of Lake Erie to Lake St. Clair during the fifteenth or sixteenth century, violently displacing the Iroquoian-speaking western basin inhabitants and forcing them north and east into present-day Ontario.[61] The ritual cannibalism that Brose notes would seem to support Stothers's argument. However, Brose instead concludes that the spread of cultural influence both north into Michigan and east of the Sandusky River, indicates voluntary trade and the peaceful spread of pottery and tool design techniques rather than the warfare or "ethnic cleansing" suggested by Stothers.[62] For Brose, intermittent, small-scale warfare, possibly exacerbated by climate change, also provides a more reasonable explanation for the occasional cannibalism appearing in the archaeological record.

Scholarly disagreement about the causes and magnitude of violence and the geographic spread of cultural forms indicates that we do not, and probably never will, fully understand the nature of relationships between neighboring villages, bands, clans, and linguistic communities in the centuries immediately preceding European contact. Did Sandusky Tradition peoples expand aggressively, or did they develop reciprocal relationships and kinship ties with other peoples who adopted their material cultures and associated beliefs and practices? Was the western basin of Lake Erie a shared landscape with overlapping land claims, open to hunting and fishing among neighboring bands? Or was it contested ground to be won through bloodshed? Early French and English sources indicate that semi-sedentary agriculturalists as well as nomadic hunter-gatherers

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[61] David M. Stothers, "Indian Hills: A Protohistoric Assistaeronon Village in the Maumee River Valley of Northwestern Ohio," *Ontario Archaeology* 36 (1981), 52.

[62] Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 55.

generally acknowledged collective property rights and maintained exclusive control of fishing territory and hunting grounds. Critically, though, these rights appear to have been tied more to the fish and game than to the land itself, meaning that the boundaries of hunting grounds might shift from year to year. Such rights constituted a claim to the productive energies of local ecosystems rather than to an inert, alienable property called "land."[63] Territorial claims may have been subject to renegotiation and regular movement. It is entirely likely that diplomacy rather than warfare characterized cross-cultural relationships and the geographical expansion of Sandusky peoples. What is unquestionably clear is that the region's people underwent dynamic changes in the century or two before Europeans invaded the lower Great Lakes.

By the early years of the seventeenth century, communities at the edges of the Black Swamp grew to include several autonomous, palisaded villages along the Maumee, Portage, and Sandusky rivers. The wetland itself offered edible plants, habitat and spawning grounds for game and fish, and raw materials for building. Glacial moraines and subtle hydrological differences across the region provided villagers with limited, yet important, arable land. Native communities systematically enlarged the best lands in these river valleys. Men girdled trees or selectively burned forests to create fields or expand oak openings and savannas, and women planted and tended crops on the cleared land.[64] The cultivation of squash, beans, and maize afforded a degree of caloric stability, offsetting any seasonal variability in food sources caused by the cooler climate. However, agricultural yields may have also declined during the worst years of the Little

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[63] On Indigenous property rights and land tenure, see Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 36-55.

[64] Tree girdling and selective burning were common practices that significantly altered landscapes, changed forest composition, and extended specific ecosystems such as meadows and prairies to create edge effects, which would allow game to be more easily hunted. Because early European observers would have been unable to identify the signs of such alterations to the land, and because much of the Ohio Country experienced significant depopulation in the second half of the seventeenth century (just before the first written observations of the region were made), it is difficult to accurately account for the degree of landscape transformation enacted by precontact inhabitants.

Ice Age. During these periods, villages appear to have relied most heavily on fishing year-round.[65] Clam harvesting and large game like deer and elk provided additional food sources in the fall and early winter, and smaller game such as squirrels and wild turkeys were important winter food sources.[66] Foraging also provided important nutrients in the form of berries, acorns, walnuts, and grapes throughout the year.[67]

This late precontact history of the Black Swamp raises two major points about Indigenous peoples' subsistence practices. First, maize agriculture proved extraordinarily appealing to western basin inhabitants even during the shorter growing seasons of the Little Ice Age. Several mutually reinforcing factors likely bound together people and their domesticated plants, including the clear nutritional benefits of the Three Sisters, the prominent role farming had come to play in the social fabric of Native societies and the reproduction of gender binaries over the course of several centuries, the central place of the Three Sisters complex in cultural origin stories, the difficulty of justifying or possibly even conceptualizing a transition away from seasonal agriculture after it had been so firmly embraced by previous generations, and, finally, the fact that farming could be relatively easily incorporated into a suite of already existing subsistence-belief practices without forcing those practices—fishing, hunting, and wetland foraging—to be abandoned or even significantly altered.

Second, despite the prominence of farming, agriculture did not immediately (or necessarily) lead to sedentism in Lake Erie's western basin, nor did it elsewhere in the Great Lakes region or in other contexts throughout human history. Rather than imagining a straight line

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[65] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 122.

[66] Ibid., 36-41.

[67] Bowen, "Late Prehistory of Northwestern Ohio," 44-45. For grapes along the Maumee River, see Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 65 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 113.

from plant and animal domestication to agriculture, sedentary living, and large-scale "civilization," we would be better off abandoning such myths of human "progress" and approach this history as the unfolding of many opportunistic relationships between human beings and the nonhuman organisms and substances that nurture and sustain us.[68] In the case of the peoples residing in and around the Black Swamp, crop cultivation certainly helped to reorganize gender relationships and slightly alter land use patterns near village sites. Yet agriculture did not foreclose older subsistence strategies or erode established lifeways and beliefs. Although Native peoples enthusiastically adopted farming as a way of partnering with and redirecting plant life toward the goal of sustaining their communities, they continued to rely heavily on hunting, fishing, and seasonal migrations, thus adapting their subsistence-cultural practices to dynamic ecosystems. In short, semi-sedentism or nomadism were highly effective modes of existence for eastern woodland peoples living in landscapes rich in fish, game, and the bounty of the forests.[69] However, during the late precontact period, climate change or intensified conflict appears to have forced different considerations and encouraged the creation of relatively large permanent or semi-permanent villages along Lake Erie's southwestern shore. Three Sisters agriculture merely

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[68] Swanson, Lien, and Ween, "Introduction: Naming the Beast—Exploring the Otherwise," 1-23.

[69] Although my argument here suggests rational decision making on the part of human beings, my thinking about human subsistence strategies rejects formalist models of economic calculation for two reasons. First, such models are often troublingly tautological: any decision that turns out to have been advantageous serves as evidence of an actor's rationality, while any decision proving to be measurably disadvantageous can be explained by its deviation from a fictive ideal behavior. While human individuals and communities have generally sought to develop the most effective subsistence or accumulation strategies, those strategies do not necessarily supersede other concerns, such as the need to maintain reciprocal relationships with other-than-human beings, trading partners, or human allies. In other words, decision making is rarely of a purely "economic" nature. Second, formalism is rooted in methodological individualism, meaning that decisions are viewed not only as rational, but as originating in a disembodied "mind." Formalism suggests that human thought and calculation drives action. This formulation is woefully incomplete. Not only is human decision making rooted in culturally specific value systems, but decisions are invariably formulated in response to and interaction with dynamic environments outside the human "mind." In other words, calculation does not precede or stand apart from sustained physical engagement with the world. For a useful rejection of formalist logics in the context of the Algonquian-French relationship in the Great Lakes region, see White, *Middle Ground*, 94-96. On the ways in which decision-making emerges out of skilled practice and material engagement with the world, see Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 27-39; and Clark and Chalmers, "The Extended Mind."

contributed to the effectiveness of this survival strategy.[70] So, for all its importance, maize farming did not constitute a revolutionary break with the past. Rather, it fit into life-worlds that people had already worked out in the context of hunting, gathering, and seasonal movement.

If we take into account the entire range of subsistence practices linking the bounty of the lake, rivers, forests, and fields to villages clustered along the Sandusky and Maumee rivers, the domesticated landscape comes a bit more into focus. From seasonal, semi-permanent, or permanent villages along the lower Maumee and along the bluffs west of the lower Sandusky, successive generations of inhabitants claimed the bounty of the rivers, the nearby lakeshore, and the forests. They extended prairie zones with fire and utilized footpaths along the glacial moraines to navigate the forested wetland. Until the cooling climate apparently spurred periods of sedentarization, seasonal movements across the region to follow fish, game, and arable land defined collective life. Even impassable tracts of the swamp forest—the closest thing we have to "wilderness"—benefitted the domesticated country by serving as a sanctuary for game animals, allowing populations of deer, elk, and other megafauna to reconstitute themselves after periods of intensive hunting.

The fact that the wetland ecotone harbored such an impressive variety of terrestrial and aquatic life undoubtedly made it an appealing place to live, with, moreover, the fertility of the soil at least partially offsetting the relative shortage of arable land by the time of the Little Ice Age. Sedentarization certainly concentrated resource use in particular areas, though we have little evidence of the extent of deforestation or overfishing. If later historical accounts from Jesuits and Indian captives provide any indication, hunting parties could range widely across the landscape, often hunting game as far south as the upper reaches of the Scioto and Olentangy

[70] Scott, *Against the Grain*, 7, makes a similar point in the earlier Mesopotamian context.

rivers, some eighty miles from Sandusky Bay; as far west as the Wabash, nearly one hundred miles from the lower Maumee, and as far east as the upper Cuyahoga, also around eighty miles from the mouth of the Sandusky. Consequently, hunting bands distributed their resource consumption—at least as far as game animals were concerned—across a large area. The entire wetland ecosystem and surrounding region were thus incorporated into a domesticated landscape that human communities strategically reshaped, but never sought to control at the level of species' reproductive cycles.

Elsewhere in the eastern woodlands, many Native peoples maintained similar settlement patterns and probably practiced semi-sedentism by choice whenever possible. There are notable exceptions to this rule, including the formation of the "city" of Cahokia, the center of Mississippian culture and the era's largest aggregation of Indigenous farmers north of Mexico. Scholars tend to understand the collapse of Cahokia in the thirteenth century as the product of environmental factors, including declines in game populations and deforestation. It is possible that the Little Ice Age may have contributed significantly to the city's decline and attendant population dispersals. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that dramatic ecological changes always prompted community dispersals—as if population decentralization and semi-sedentism or nomadism were primarily responses to crisis. Rather, in many instances, population concentration and the formation of alliances were more typical adjustments to uncertain conditions. If we adopt this perspective, then we can begin to cast the colonial conflicts of the eighteenth century in a new light. By the second half of that century, as we will see, the decentralized village world of the Lake Erie basin and Ohio Valley had become a region of relatively powerful Native villages confronting anemic European empires.

Throughout the domesticated landscape, Native peoples forged productive and varied relationships with plants, animals, water, wind, and soil. Through the teachings of elders and individual experiences, inhabitants honed practical skills and accumulated a reservoir of embodied bio-geographical knowledge to meet the challenges of their dynamic world. Yet, despite the apparent adaptability of Sandusky and Maumee communities, seventeenth-century conflicts, exacerbated by European trade, would eventually dissolve this domesticated landscape and scatter the region's inhabitants across the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley.

The Unmaking of a Domesticated Landscape

The permanent arrival of Europeans along the Atlantic coast transformed Indigenous life-worlds and altered the human geography of the Great Lakes region in profound ways. At no point, though, did Europeans gain control of this vast territory. This point is worth emphasizing. The European presence in the region, especially during the seventeenth century, was geographically limited. In fact, the French and British never controlled more than narrow networks of trade and tiny, relatively isolated, outposts. Yet, as with their eighteenth-century imperial successors, seventeenth-century Europeans had outsized, cascading effects on the political ecologies of the Great Lakes. The remainder of this chapter will explore the remapping of the Black Swamp and Lake Erie basin during the second half of the seventeenth century. For Black Swamp peoples, the major consequence of the European presence in eastern North America was warfare that spread into the Erie basin and Ohio Valley, effectively depopulating the region. For half a century or more, the Black Swamp would lack permanent human inhabitants, providing something of an ecological reboot and setting the stage for an eighteenth-

century remaking of the domesticated landscape in ways that echoed earlier social formations and land use practices.

For a brief period in the early seventeenth century, inhabitants of the western Great Lakes and the Ohio Country experienced Europeans primarily through circulating trade goods, which were easily incorporated into Native economies. Longstanding Native trade networks linked peoples residing throughout the eastern half of the continent during the early years of contact along North America's northern Atlantic coast. Because copper was a durable, high-value, culturally significant trade metal, its presence in excavated sites gives us some sense of the nature of regional trade. Along the Maumee, Portage, and Sandusky rivers, archaeologists have identified copper fragments sourced from Native mining locations in the upper Great Lakes alongside contemporaneous European copper. While the majority of the metal came from repurposed European kettles, twenty-six percent of identified fragments at the large village on the lower Maumee—the "Indian Hills" site—came from Native sources.[71] It appears that inhabitants engaged in vigorous trade with Europeans or European-connected peoples to their east while at the same time maintaining relationships with western Algonquian peoples to the north and west. For example, oval glass beads recovered from the "Indian Hills" site are identical to those found at Wendat (Huron) and Neutral village sites in eastern Ontario, potentially suggesting that western Lake Erie inhabitants did not have direct commercial relationships with the French, but rather traded with eastern Native groups involved in the European trade.[72]

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[71] Timothy J. Abel and Adrian L. Burke, "The Protohistoric Time Period in Northwest Ohio: Perspectives from the XRF Analysis of Metallic Trade Materials." *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 39, no. 2 (2014): 179-199. Figure on 187.

[72] David M. Stothers, "The Protohistoric Time Period in the Southwestern Lake Erie Region: European-Derived Trade Material, Population Movement and Cultural Realignment," in *Cultures before Contact: The Late Prehistory of Ohio and Surrounding Regions*, ed. Robert A. Genheimer (Columbus: Ohio Archaeological Council, 2000), 58-59, 70.

Overall, the concurrent accumulation of both Native and European copper highlights the dynamic exchange networks existing simultaneous to and, quite often, independent of Europeans. The high percentage of Native copper suggests that the significance and overall effects of European copper and the relationships forged by the early fur trade may not have been as important for the Lake Erie region as scholars once assumed. At the very least, the copper trade suggests that the arrival of the French, Dutch, and English did not immediately alter relationships between Indian communities. To be sure, disease, warfare, and trade utterly transformed the lives of Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples in the east., We ought, however, to imagine the inhabitants of the Black Swamp facing simultaneously east and west, perhaps becoming increasingly attuned to European-oriented trade while at the same time continuing to value and even privilege longstanding western trade circuits that allowed them to regularly renew alliances with kin in the upper Great Lakes.[73]

The multisided copper trade once again raises the larger historiographical question about the domestication of the past itself. Archaeologists and historians often classify past events as "prehistoric," "protohistoric," or "historic." Prehistory refers to a time before writing references a particular human community. Protohistory signifies a period before a people possesses writing, but after the recording of their existence in the writings of others who are generally not firsthand participants or observers. History, then, begins with detailed written records and firsthand accounts. By decentering written texts and emphasizing continuity rather than change across these temporal thresholds, we can dispense with the presumed civilizational hierarchies and stadial view of the past assumed by the imperial periodizing schema. Taking the Black Swamp as an example, we might ask, did first contact with European goods really transfigure villages on

[73] Abel and Burke, "Protohistoric Time Period in Northwest Ohio," 194.

the Maumee River from “prehistoric” to “protohistoric”? If so, then what actual material changes constituted this transformation? Likewise, did French exploration of Lake Erie, the Maumee and Sandusky rivers, or the Ohio Country signify the transition from “protohistory” to “history” later in the century? If so, how were the rhythms of human and nonhuman life fundamentally changed by this “transition”? The fact that Indigenous communities living along the temporal and spatial edges of European contact so easily integrated European copper into their lives suggests that although the arrival of Europeans may have been significant, it was not immediately or even necessarily world changing. In the Great Lakes, European trade did not absorb Native America. Rather, Europeans and their goods were incorporated into Indigenous geopolitics and subsistence practices. Native nations often *domesticated* European trade goods and Europeans themselves.

The Black Swamp itself may have played a small role in shaping trade during the first decades of the seventeenth century as the European presence increased along the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence River. On the one hand, the Black Swamp does not appear to have seriously impeded regional trade to the west or east. Native traders may have followed established canoe routes across Lake Erie to circumvent the wetland despite the dangers posed by the lake’s notoriously choppy waters and violent storms (a function of its shallow depth). Or perhaps known footpaths along the swamp’s glacial moraines and beach ridges made overland passage possible for much of the year. Regardless, villages along the Sandusky at the eastern edge of the wetland contained some Native copper while villages along the Maumee accumulated European copper. On the other hand, the fact that the Indian Hills village at the northwestern edge of the swamp contained a higher percentage of Native copper than similar sites along the Sandusky River could indicate that the wetland functioned as a physical boundary, albeit a highly porous

one. Regardless, it seems that the wetland did not serve as an effective buffer or protective zone when violence in the east began to spread into western Great Lakes.

The eventual fate of western Lake Erie inhabitants at both edges of the swamp remains contested, but scant linguistic evidence suggests a possible connection between early seventeenth-century Sandusky peoples and the Kickapoos and Potawatomis encountered by French missionaries and traders in eastern Wisconsin late in the century.[74] The 1641 "Nouvelle France" map indicates a Sauk ("Kovatocronon" [sic]) presence in the region, while the 1656 Sanson map identifies Meskwakis (Squenquioronon or Fox) in the same area along the lake's southwestern shore. There is a strong possibility, however, that informants were either mistaken or that the reported villages merely served as temporary encampments.[75] Most mid-seventeenth-century French maps depict a Mascouten (Assistaehronon or "Nation of Fire") presence in the region, suggesting that much of Lake Erie's western basin may have been Mascouten territory in the decades before the Iroquois Wars began.

The *Jesuit Relations* reports that in 1641 a large Neutral war party of some 2,000 warriors attacked Mascoutens living in southern Michigan. Around 170 women and children were taken captive in what was likely a mourning war.[76] Undoubtedly shaken and greatly diminished, the

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[74] Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 64.

[75] See John Steckley, "The Early Map of 'Nouvelle France': A Linguistic Analysis." *Ontario Archaeology* 51 (1990): 17-29, map on 26-27 and chart on 18. For Nicolas Sanson's map, "Le Canada, ou Nouvelle France," see Kenneth A. Kershaw, *Early Printed Maps of Canada, vol. I, 1540-1703* (Ancaster, ON: Kershaw Publishing, 1993), 126-127.

[76] Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 21 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1898), 193. The warfare between Neutrals and Mascoutens described by the missionary to the Neutrals remains uncorroborated. Nevertheless, the account places a Mascouten presence in the lower Great Lakes region, corresponding with "Novvelle France" and other early colonial maps. Overall, this violence between the Neutrals and the Algonquian-speaking peoples of Lake Erie's western basin indicates that Native nations did not simply fit into European imperial geopolitics. Rather, they pursued their own interests independent of the French-British rivalry. The French gave the Neutrals their moniker when the tribe sided with neither the Haudenosaunees nor the Wendats during the Iroquois Wars. The label stuck, but its reductive description quickly proved inaccurate, as this conflict suggests.

remaining Mascoutens stayed along the southwestern shore of Lake Erie in present-day Michigan and Ohio for a time before apparently dispersing into southwestern Michigan and the upper Ohio Valley in an effort to escape continued Neutral aggression from the Ontario peninsula.[77] By the 1680s, the Mascoutens had entirely abandoned the western Erie basin and united with Kickapoos in the Illinois Country.[78] David Stothers has reasoned that the Kickapoo-Mascouten alliance could indicate shared cultural ties dating farther back in time, perhaps to the first half of the seventeenth century or earlier, and the southwestern shore of Lake Erie.[79] Although evidence is scant, Stothers concludes that the late precontact peoples of the Black Swamp and its vicinity were in fact Mascoutens and Kickapoos.[80]

The challenge for researchers seeking to trace many of the movements of seventeenth-century Great Lakes inhabitants lies not so much in the absence of a Native written record, but rather in the inevitable lacunae in French missionary and trader accounts, and especially in the effects of sustained contact with Europeans. The very presence of French, Dutch, and English

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[77] Stothers, "Protohistoric Time Period in the Southwestern Lake Erie Region," 75. Stothers and others, relying on an interpretation of archaeological evidence, suggest that conflict between the Mascoutens and Neutrals had been ongoing for two centuries prior to its culmination in the 1640s. See David M. Stothers, "The 'Michigan Owasco' and the Iroquois Co-Tradition: Late Woodland Conflict, Conquest, and Cultural Realignment in the Western Lower Great Lakes," *Northeast Anthropology* 49 (1995): 5-41; and David M. Stothers and Timothy J. Abel, "Beads, Brass, and Beaver: Archaeological Reflections of Protohistoric 'Fire Nation' Trade and Exchange," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 19 (1991): 121-134.

Warfare between the Odawas and Mascoutens also occurred during the seventeenth century. For an Odawa account, see Andrew J. Blackbird, *History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan; a grammar of their language, and personal and family history of the author* (Ypsilanti, MI: The Ypsilantian Job Printing House, 1887), 91-94.

[78] Brose, "Penumbral Protohistory on Lake Erie's South Shore," 61; Steckley, "Early Map of 'Nouvelle France."

[79] Stothers, "Indian Hills," 53.

[80] Stothers, "Protohistoric Time Period in the Southwestern Lake Erie Region," 73; Stothers, "Indian Hills," 52. This evidence contrasts with earlier assumptions by ethnohistorians (based on French maps and Jesuit accounts) that most of Lake Erie's south shore was occupied by the Erie people. See, for example, Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio: An Ethnohistorical Report on the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa of Northwest Ohio* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974), 63.

traders and settlers along the Atlantic coast, in eastern river valleys, and far up the St. Lawrence River by the middle decades of the century facilitated the spread of epidemic diseases across Native communities, added new dynamics and considerations to already-complex regional geopolitics, and created a vigorous transatlantic fur trade that accelerated and prolonged existing conflicts over hunting lands between the Haudenosaunees (Iroquois Confederacy) and their Iroquoian- and Algonquian-speaking neighbors and adversaries to the west and north, especially the Anishinaabeg. The warfare prompted by disease, trade, and the presence of new European political actors shook previous political arrangements. French observers could only speculate about the general character and geographic distribution of local and regional polities before the outbreak of large-scale violence.

Sustained conflict began in the 1630s when overhunting and declining beaver populations in Iroquoia spurred the five nations of the confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca) to rapidly expand in an effort to control territory rich in beavers.[81] Armed with guns provided by the Dutch and English and seeking to wrest control of the fur trade away from the Wendats (Hurons)[82] and western Algonquian tribes, Haudenosaunee war parties began attacking Wendat fur traders.[83] Over the next decade, the Haudenosaunees displaced Neutral, Wenro, Erie,

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[81] Contemporary accounts suggest that much of New England and the Mid-Atlantic region (New York and Pennsylvania) had been so overhunted by the 1640s that virtually no beaver population remained. See Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 53.

[82] The Wendats are commonly called "Huron" in seventeenth-century French and English accounts. As with the other historical Native groups referenced in this study, I have chosen to use the name these peoples called themselves, or an anglicized variation of that name. In this particular instance, I refer to the Wendats and Tionontatis (Petuns) separately until they became effectively indistinguishable while residing around Green Bay. By the time "rebel" Wendats moved from Detroit to Sandusky in the mid-eighteenth century, the British with whom they traded anglicized their autonym, rendering it "Wyandot." I use this anglicized version in subsequent chapters to distinguish between the peoples who had removed from Detroit in the 1730s and the Huron-Wendats who remained.

[83] On the gun trade, see David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), chap. 1.

and Tionontati (Petun or "Tobacco Nation") villages and sent Wendats fleeing west.[84] Migrant Tionontatis from Georgian Bay briefly stopped along the lower Maumee River in 1652 and 1653, at virtually the same time that fleeing Mascoutens seem to have been arriving in the western basin to seek refuge with kin.[85] In the mid-1650s, Haudenosaunee warriors attacked Erie villages, destroying the nation and absorbing survivors into the confederacy.[86] The refugees and earlier inhabitants of Lake Erie's southwestern shore abandoned the region's villages around this time as well. Tionontatis, Mascoutens, Kickapoos, and others gradually trekked westward around Lake Michigan, and finally to Green Bay.[87] Historian Richard White has likened the results of this warfare to "a knife scoring a pane of glass" and eventually shattering it. According to White, these Iroquois Wars (or Beaver Wars) left only "fragments" of the Native societies west of Iroquoia.[88]

White's compelling and influential description of a domesticated village world violently fractured by warfare and disease reflects the accounts of seventeenth-century imperial officials, traders, and Jesuit missionaries. However, recent scholarship questions the extent to which the

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[84] Richter, *Before the Revolution*, 148.

[85] Stothers, "Indian Hills"; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 30-34.

[86] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 9; Richter, *Before the Revolution*, 148.

[87] Near the refugee center at Green Bay, Kickapoos and Mascoutens held close alliances with Miami-Wea bands. The fact that the Miami homelands stretched from the western edge of the Black Swamp to the Mississippi River in the Illinois country, may lend credence to Stothers's assertion that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century inhabitants of Lake Erie's western basin were Kickapoos and Mascoutens, some of whom were possibly adopted by the Miamis or their other Algonquian-speaking western neighbor, the Potawatomis. See Stothers, "Indian Hills," 53.

[88] White, *Middle Ground*, 1. For a brief summary of the Iroquois Wars (with maps), see Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 29-35. For more detailed explications, see White, *Middle Ground*, 1-49. For an account of the Iroquois Wars that centers on the Odawas of Michilimackinac, see Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), 31-67.

Iroquois Wars decimated Native social forms, trade relations, and village associations.[89] Historian Heidi Bohaker, for example, has traced connections created by Anishinaabe *nindoodemag*, patrilineal kinship groups or clans that linked individuals "who shared the same other-than-human progenitor being."[90] According to Bohaker, even in the midst of the mid- to late seventeenth-century social upheavals, "Networks of *nindoodemag* and cross-cultural alliances gave temporarily displaced peoples access to land and resources in the same manner that they supported Anishinaabe peoples engaged in long-distance travel."[91] *Nindoodemag*, Bohaker concludes, held together Algonquian village worlds both before and after the Iroquois Wars. When Indigenous women married French fur traders, they followed a common method of securing kin. The cross-cultural middle ground that emerged with the Native-French alliance system in the seventeenth century and flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century was primarily built on the mechanisms of kin-making facilitated by the *nindoodem* of each community and less on connections sustained by the French.[92] This revision of White's synthesis centers Native world-making and stresses continuity in the face of changes wrought by warfare.[93]

Other recent works have examined Haudenosaunee and Algonquian motivations anew. Susan Sleeper-Smith notes that the French built several forts on Haudenosaunee homelands

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[89] For a useful summary of recent critiques of White's work, see Michael A. McDonnell, "Rethinking the Middle Ground: French Colonialism and Indigenous Communities in the *Pays d'en Haut*" in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 79-108.

[90] Heidi Bohaker, "'Nindoodemag': The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Jan. 2006): 23-52. Quote on 25-26.

[91] Ibid., 48.

[92] Bohaker, "'Nindoodemag'," 49-50. On the connections made by real and fictive kinship networks in the upper Great Lakes, see Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[93] It should be noted that White does present a nuanced interpretation of Algonquian kin-making practices and their role in facilitating the emergence of a political-cultural middle ground in the Great Lakes. See, White, *Middle Ground*, 15-17.

during the seventeenth century and attempted to entirely exclude the nations of the confederacy and their English allies from the fur trade.[94] Such affronts to Iroquois sovereignty rather than simple trade-motivated aggression may better explain the causes of conflict in the eastern Great Lakes. Moreover, Sleeper-Smith argues, factors other than warfare could have spurred the migrations of both the Haudenosaunees and Algonquian-speaking peoples. Citing the influence of *The Jesuit Relations*, which evince a strong bias against the Iroquois, she contends that the Mohawks and their allies sought to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties as they spread out from their homelands. Likewise, the Algonquian "refugees" may have heard reports from kin or from the Jesuits themselves about bountiful fishing and hunting in places like Green Bay and the western Great Lakes, thus encouraging them to relocate to these regions.[95] It is possible, then, that the migrations described in early French accounts may have been more opportunistic than desperate, the result of motives far more complex than a simple desire to control the fur trade or evade violence.

Given these challenges to some of White's fundamental interpretations, how should we understand the causes and impact of the Iroquois Wars? The view from the Black Swamp suggests that inhabitants of Lake Erie's western basin had enough arable land, abundant fish and terrestrial game, and plentiful forage. They had become native to this unique landscape. The abandonment of the region by the middle of the seventeenth century and the very brief occupation of an area village site by migrating Tionontatis in the early 1650s indicates that warfare or at least rumors of war probably penetrated the Ohio Country by midcentury, most

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[94] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 72.

[95] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 72-75. On the productive agriculture and fishing around Green Bay, see Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 54 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 227.

likely precipitating an exodus from the region. Far from being "shattered" peoples, however, those who left the lower Great Lakes found refuge with their western kin and reconfigured spiritual-subsistence practices in their new environs, which were not unlike their eastern Great Lakes homeland.

Nevertheless, the migrations undoubtedly disrupted subsistence practices by removing the migrants from the familiar landscapes in which they had harvested food, built shelter, and raised families. Maumee and Sandusky villagers lost access to the bountiful game and forage provided by the Black Swamp when they left behind the fields, grasslands, rivers, forests, and hunting grounds to which they had adapted their seasonal movements and labors over many generations. In short, the displaced peoples of Lake Erie's western basin lost the stability granted by the unique forest, grassland, and littoral assemblage, rendering accumulated community knowledge of the region at least partially irrelevant to their lives moving forward. While they were not "shattered," the peoples of the Ohio Country left behind ecologically situated practical knowledge and social stability as they moved away from familiar environments. Given the fact that Native communities depended on foraging and hunting within and around the bountiful wetland, as Sleeper-Smith notes, it is likely that the migrations away from the Black Swamp during the Iroquois Wars were *not* voluntary. The challenge for scholars is to balance the important revisionist emphasis on Native peoples' survival, resilience, and prosperity with the fact that seventeenth-century migrations undoubtedly severed important human-nonhuman relationships, especially in places of biological abundance like the Black Swamp.[96] Ultimately,

[96] Sleeper-Smith offers the most important account of how the Black Swamp and Ohio Valley wetlands helped shape the eighteenth-century political economy of the region. She notes that wetlands can be viewed as "breadbaskets" for the abundant nutritious plant life they offered Native communities. She goes on to explain that the centers of the British fur trade, Albany and Philadelphia, eventually "captured a large portion of the furs harvested in the Ohio River, supplied in great part by the Black Swamp." See Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 39-46, 92-96. Quotes on 39 and 95-96, respectively. On the nature of knowledge as place-

the prairie-forest, swamp-forest, and coastal ecotones around the wetland provided such varied food that it is difficult to imagine movement away from the region to colder northern climates as anything but difficult for migrants.

Wilding the Land

By the time Robert de La Salle and other French explorers and traders began traversing Lake Erie and parts of the Ohio Country in the 1670s, the region appears to have been mostly depopulated as waves of migrants moved into the heart of the upper Great Lakes to utilize hunting lands or escape the violence of the Iroquois Wars. Yet, the Black Swamp and other forests, wetlands, and prairie pockets between Lake Erie and the Ohio River functioned as refugia for game populations, a fact that Algonquian peoples around Detroit, Haudenosaunees in the Finger Lakes, and French imperial agents and traders readily recognized. Like other regions, hunters and fur traders eventually incorporated the Black Swamp and surrounding environs in transnational trade circuits. Even if village after village of hunters had abandoned the area. wealth could be extracted from this depopulated region.

Traveling in western Lake Erie in 1687 and 1688, French military officer Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron de Lahontan, commander of Fort St. Joseph on Lake St. Clair (near present Detroit), described the danger of traveling along the Lake Erie littoral. Lahontan noted that the south shore of Lake Erie was "commonly frequented by none but warriors, whether the Iroquois, the Illinois, the Miamis, etc. and it is very dangerous to stop there."[97] Ultimately, the

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and context-specific, see Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 132-151; Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

[97] Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, vol. 1, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905), 138.

extensive zone of conflict and the accompanying demographic displacement created a new geography of ecological instability in places where refugee populations concentrated as well as a partial wilding of lands that had been abandoned.[98] The war reconfigured regional ecologies by placing incredible stress on places like Green Bay where migrants had congregated while leaving other places with little sustained human presence. In effect, as Europeans sought to domesticate the lands, trade relationships, and geopolitics along the Atlantic Coast and St. Lawrence River, they inadvertently transformed the country south of Lake Erie into an unpredictable, frightening wilderness.[99]

Richard White notes that Great Lakes peoples had always dealt with both seasonally and annually variable food supplies. However, the combination of high population density in refugee centers and French trading posts like Green Bay or Michilimackinac, the fact that these places were located in relatively high latitudes, and the colder seasonal temperatures of the Little Ice Age combined to make both overhunting and crop failure much likelier prospects than had previously been the case. Between the 1670s and 1690s, according to explorer and trader accounts, crops indeed failed and residents of the larger villages suffered.[100]

In Lake Erie's western basin, on the other hand, the small pockets of village land, fields, and fire-managed prairies disappeared as native flora and fauna reclaimed the territory and the swamp forest returned. Because most of the tree species growing in the Black Swamp reached mature heights in as little as 15 to 30 years, the communities and hunting grounds of late

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[98] The word "wilding" is borrowed from Riley, *Once and Future Great Lakes Country,* chap. 3.

[99] Heather Ann Swanson offers a brilliant analysis of "domestication as a process of disorientation" in which the act of domesticating a species or landscape produces disruptive, unintended, and often bewildering effects. "[W]ildness," Swanson argues, drawing on the work of Deborah Bird Rose, "is something made through the violence of colonial settlement." See Heather Ann Swanson, "Domestication Gone Wild: Pacific Salmon and the Disruption of the Domus," in *Domestication Gone Wild,* 141-158 (quotes on 152).

[100] White, *Middle Ground,* 42-48.

Sandusky Tradition peoples vanished quickly. Yet, because the trunks of elm, ash, beech, hickory, maple, oak, and other species of the region continue to widen throughout their lifecycles, the peoples who eventually resettled the land in the first half of the eighteenth century would have been able to see where the fields and villages of their predecessors had been located two or three generations earlier, making it easier to reestablish former village sites by felling or girdling the younger, thinner trees.

The overall impact of this "wilding," or ecological succession, was relatively minor in the Black Swamp, but it may have contributed to an important global cooling trend. In and around the wetland a small percentage of the land had been put to agricultural or hunting use prior to the Iroquois Wars. After the abandonment of the Erie basin in the mid-seventeenth century, thousands of acres of farmland soon returned to hardwood forests. The fire-managed prairies near the edges of the Black Swamp—potentially many thousands of acres—also reforested quickly during the seventy-year absence of permanent settlements. Without immediate competition from tall trees, recovering woodlands were initially more biodiverse than the adjoining old-growth forests. The regrowth of trees and understory plants in lands previously managed by Native farmers and hunters occurred throughout the Americas between the early sixteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth century as European diseases spread across the South and North American continents and throughout the Caribbean, resulting in the deaths of perhaps 50 million Indigenous peoples. Recent research suggests that the reforestation of agricultural and hunting lands on such a large scale reduced global carbon dioxide levels by as much as 7.4 petagrams (7.4×10^{15} grams), causing global temperatures to drop noticeably between 1577 and 1694, the only period of the Little Ice Age that was planetary in scope.[101]

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[101] Alexander Koch, et al., "Earth System Impact of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas after 1492," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 207 (March 2019): 13-36, estimates on 25 and 27, respectively. See also

While permanent human occupation of the Black Swamp region ceased during the second half of the seventeenth century, hunting parties still relied on the wetland for beaver, mink, and otter pelts. Although the Haudenosaunees claimed all lands north and south of Lake Erie and deep into the Ohio Country, the region was essentially a vast hunting reserve used not just by the Five Nations, but also by migrating Algonquian or Iroquoian groups. Because the fur trade formed one central pillar of the market economy and catalyzed or renewed the geopolitical relationships between Native communities and Europeans, the Haudenosaunees regarded all pelts taken from the Lake Erie basin and upper Ohio Valley as belonging exclusively to them. The displaced peoples thought otherwise and, as White explains, "both groups murdered each other with alarming frequency and recklessly overhunted the beaver and other fur bearers in the contested area."[102] Naturally, some areas were more accessible to hunting parties than others, meaning that the effects of overhunting could be unevenly distributed across a relatively small geographic area.

One telling account comes from Father Henri Nouvel, a Jesuit missionary, who traveled from Michilimackinac to evangelize to a small band camped near what would become Detroit in the winter of 1675-76. Noting plentiful deer, bears, and wildcats in the area, Nouvel described the region, which was fewer than fifty miles from the edges of the Black Swamp, as "very advantageous as regards Hunting." By winter's end, the game was still abundant. Unfortunately for a band of Mississauga allies with whom Nouvel had parted ways late in the journey from the Straits of Mackinac the previous autumn, food had been scarce that winter. Although the

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William M. Denevan, "After 1492: Nature Rebounds," *Geographical Review* 106, no. 3 (July 2016): 381-398. For discussions about how the Great Dying fits into the larger geo-historical question of the Anthropocene and its origins, see Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519 (March 12, 2015): 171-180; and Jan Zalasiewicz, et al., "Colonization of the Americas, 'Little Ice Age' climate, and Bomb-produced Carbon: Their Role in Defining the Anthropocene," *Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 2 (August 2015): 117-127.

[102] White, *Middle Ground*, 150-151.

Mississaguas were encamped only "a distance of some days' journey" from the Odawas on the northern shore of Lake Erie, sixty-five of their number had starved. Aware of the tragedy, the Odawas evidently agreed with Nouvel that their own devotion to Christ over the cold months had been rewarded.[103]

Supernatural intervention aside, the difference in game populations across this short distance suggests either that human population density and competition for game or some specific socioecological factor—or both—created a dramatic landscape of want and plenty during the Iroquois Wars. White explains that "normal cultural controls for conserving game seem to have failed when several nations competed for, or were compressed into, the same hunting area."[104] It is unclear how many Odawas and Mississaugas lived in the general vicinity of Lake Erie's western shore that winter, nor do we know the precise location of the Mississauga winter site. Consequently, we cannot say whether localized competition, past seasons of reckless overhunting in the region, or colder than normal temperatures played a role in the diverging fates

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[103] Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 60 (Cleveland: Burrows Brothers, 1899), 219-221, 227; White, *Middle Ground*, 47.

[104] White, *Middle Ground*, 48. White also notes Nouvel's winter among the Odawas near Detroit. He explains that the area "was an old neutral ground that was now being hunted."

Discussions of overhunting by Native peoples once provoked great debate among anthropologists and historians regarding the figure of the "ecological Indian." Without rehashing these debates, I will simply note that Indigenous cosmologies and practices emerged out of attentive observation of and engagement with the local environment, thus making overhunting a generally unlikely, though not inconceivable, prospect for most Native peoples of eastern North America. However, bodies of "traditional ecological knowledge" may not have been able to account for or quickly adapt to abrupt changes caused by the imposition of a voracious European market economy, the introduction of firearms, prolonged warfare associated with the permanent arrival of Europeans, or periods of relatively rapid climate change. When all of these factors occurred simultaneously, as they did in the seventeenth century, instances of overhunting probably occurred. For works discussing overhunting and the fur trade, see Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships in the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Shepard Krech III, *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade: A Critique of* Keepers of the Game (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981); Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999). For an excellent review essay on the limits of the "Ecological Indian" trope, see James D. Rice, "Beyond the 'Ecological Indian' and 'Virgin Soil Epidemics': New Perspectives on Native American and the Environment," *History Compass* 12, no. 9 (2014): 745-757. For useful North American temperature reconstructions over the past millennium, see V. Trouet, et al., "A 1500-year Reconstruction of Annual Mean Temperature for Temperate North America on Decadal-to-Multidecadal Time Scales," *Environmental Research Letters* 8, no. 2 (2013): 1-10. See esp. graphs on 8-9.

of the two bands. It is possible, though, that the Mississauga encampment was too far from Lake Erie's swamp forest and its abundant game. The wetland would have provided cover for wildlife during hunting incursions from the east, meaning that the area around Detroit was shielded by both the Black Swamp and the rough waters of Lake Erie that hunters were reluctant to brave in the colder months.

Whether or not the wetland played a role as a buffer from Iroquois hunters, the very presence of both Anishinaabe encampments indicates that Haudenosaunee control of the region was far from absolute in the mid-1670s. The uncertain geopolitics of the period, the uneven distribution of firearms among Indigenous communities, and the delicate alliances involving Native nations and the competing European powers—France and Britain—meant that most of the region between Lake Erie and the Ohio River remained contested territory, free of permanent settlements until the late 1720s.[105] The overall population of deer, bison, and fur-bearing rodents almost certainly increased during this period thanks to the long absence of humans as well as the French crown's temporary ban on the fur trade, which was implemented in 1696 to save money on the maintenance of distant forts and trade relationships and to end the market glut back home.[106] Even during intermittent periods of intensive hunting, deer, bison, and fur-bearing animals throughout the Lake Erie basin could evade human predators in the densely forested wetland and their populations could recover relatively quickly. Baron de Lahontan, marveling at the abundance of game along the edges of the Black Swamp in the late 1680s, wrote, "I cannot express what vast quantities of Deer and Turkeys are to be found in these Woods, and in the vast Meads that lye upon the South side of the Lake. At the bottom of the Lake, we find wild Beeves

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[105] On the depopulation and repopulation of the Ohio country, see Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 30, 43-44; Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 9-10; White, *Middle Ground*, 1-3, 186-196.

[106] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 35; White, *Middle Ground*, 113.

upon the Banks of two pleasant Rivers that disembogue into it."[107] Although Lahontan may not have ventured ashore, the avid hunter was clearly impressed by the profusion of wildlife found in the coastal marshes and meadows between the Sandusky and Maumee rivers.

Traveling peoples used Lake Erie's western basin as a war road, hunting grounds, and site of both failed and fruitful winter camps. For the Odawas, Mississaugas, Miamis, Haudenosaunees, and French, the wetland was both vibrant ecosystem and charnel house, a place of danger and possibility. The question for French officials was how to bring this and surrounding regions under their protection to promote geopolitical stability and extend the geographic scope of the fur trade. The construction of Fort St. Joseph in 1686 was meant to achieve these goals. However, a Haudenosaunee attack on Fort Denonville (later site of Fort Niagara) in spring 1688 halted the flow of supplies to the western outpost and encouraged a bored and dissatisfied Baron de Lahontan to assemble his men, set Fort St. Joseph ablaze, and march to the French outpost at Michilimackinac for supplies.[108] Until the Great Peace of Montreal ended the Iroquois Wars and encouraged the establishment of Fort Detroit in 1701, French influence in western Lake Erie remained nonexistent.

Unlike French efforts to claim the lower Great Lakes borderlands, the Anishinaabeg and Wendats successfully reconquered the contested territory, thanks in part to their connections to French traders who supplied them with firearms. As early as the 1670s, some displaced peoples began returning to their eastern Great Lakes homelands.[109] After resettling in Michilimackinac one Odawa band moved south to reoccupy sacred ground at Bkejwanong (Walpole Island) on

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[107] Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, vol. 1, 138.

[108] Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America*, vol. 1, 152. For the editor's narrative summary, see Reuben Gold Thwaites, "Introduction," *New Voyages to North America*, xvii-xxiii.

[109] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 40.

Lake St. Clair. This push southward, along with the previously mentioned Odawa and Mississauga hunting camps, suggests a concerted effort by the Anishinaabeg to reclaim land between Lake Huron and Lake Erie.[110] During the 1680s, these groups began driving the Haudenosaunees from the region.[111]

By the end of the century, many Native communities from Green Bay migrated to the Ohio River Valley and, eventually, to Lake Erie's western basin in pursuit of agricultural and hunting lands and trade. In 1696, the French king, Louis XIV, revoked colonial fur trading privileges in the western Great Lakes to help stabilize prices and increase profits in a market flooded with beaver peltries. In response, Indigenous, Métis, and French fur traders moved eastward to establish connections with British trading posts and to hunt otter, mink, fox, and other animals now in greater demand than beavers. These animals could be found in abundance in the Black Swamp and smaller wetlands scattered throughout country south of Lake Erie.[112] With the closing of the fur trade and the retreat of the Iroquois Confederacy, people slowly returned to western Lake Erie. By 1700, the Haudenosaunees, now forced into a defensive position in their homeland, sued for peace.

For thousands of years, humans had made their homes at the edges of the Black Swamp, adapting to the limitations of the marshy, sometimes impassable landscape while simultaneously benefitting from the abundance it provided. Indigenous communities became native to their environments, simultaneously creating homelands and cultural practices that merged their lives and livelihoods with the ecosystem niches upon which they depended. Occasional and flexible

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[110] Ibid., 47-48.

[111] Ibid., 65-66.

[112] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 90-92; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 35.

relationships with plants and animals that did not involve systematic confinement or control allowed communities to migrate annually across a region of forests, rivers, prairies, and lakes. Even enthusiastically adopted agricultural practices were incorporated into annual subsistence rhythms. Nevertheless, the Iroquois Wars revealed the fragility of this world. Although the peoples of the Lake Erie basin undoubtedly reconstituted their communities in Green Bay or elsewhere, they had lost a verdant homeland that would not be easily recovered.

The end of the Iroquois Wars and the transformation of the fur trade heralded the eventual repopulation of the Ohio Country and the remaking of the domesticated landscape. As we will see, during much of the eighteenth century the region around the Black Swamp would provide bountiful hunting, abundant arable land along major waterways, and new homelands for migrating or newly displaced peoples. A new domesticated Native landscape would emerge during the mid-eighteenth century. The depopulation and wilding of the landscape sparked by the Iroquois Wars had created the conditions of possibility for the new social formations that would allow effective resistance to an emergent Anglo-American settler colonial project.

CHAPTER III:
INDIGENOUS TERRITORY AND THE LIMITS OF EMPIRE

Indigenous Power on the Middle Ground

The decades-long absence of permanent human settlements from the Black Swamp region almost erased these lands from the collective memory of the bands that had migrated to Green Bay and other western locales in the mid-seventeenth century. Almost, but not quite. Descendants of former inhabitants eventually returned to claim what they regarded as their homelands in the early years of the eighteenth century. However, the Wendat (Huron and Tionontati) confederacy and the Anishinaabeg (mainly *Niswi-mishkodewinan* or Council of Three Fires members: Ojibwes, Odawas, and Potawatomis) who settled near Detroit; Shawnees and Delawares migrating from the south and east; the Haudenosaunees and their diaspora; French traders, habitants, missionaries, and military officials; and British traders and settler-colonists all eyed the country between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Each would seek to establish new villages, hunting grounds, trading posts, or forts in the region during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century.

In this chapter, I examine the resettlement of the Black Swamp between roughly 1700 and the late 1760s. While my narrative briefly moves beyond the edges of the wetland to relevant events occurring at Detroit or in the upper Ohio Valley, I make such detours in service of my overarching argument that despite French and, later, British pretentions to regional sovereignty, Indigenous bands effectively claimed the Black Swamp and virtually all land between the Ohio River and Lake Erie by midcentury. This is not to say that Native communities exercised absolute control over the region's ecosystems or geopolitics. Settlers of what became known as the Ohio Country lived at the whim of the shifting seasons and the bounty they could coax from

fields, forests, and rivers. Likewise, every village was subject to trade relationships, alliances, and military or diplomatic maneuvering that far exceeded their control. Overall, though, I contend that many Indigenous kin- or clan-based groups, villages, and nations were more powerful and consequential than the French or the British for much of the eighteenth century.

This argument fits within a body of revisionist scholarship that has in recent decades highlighted the agency, autonomy, and political prowess of American Indians. Rather than view Indigenous peoples as regrettable, though inevitable, victims of European or Euro-American colonialism, scholars studying diverse Native nations have revealed histories of successful armed resistance, effective empire building, creative cultural adaptation, canny acts of diplomacy, and confident assertions of independence.[1] Framing colonial histories in such a way challenges us to see the contingent nature of encounters, to approach our various subjects symmetrically, and to be wary of reading uncertain outcomes back onto the interactions that supposedly led to them.

A few prominent studies have described the power dynamics between Native peoples and European/Euro-American colonizers using metaphors that reference literal on-the-ground spatial/material arrangements. From "middle grounds" to "divided grounds" to "native grounds," historians have drawn implicit and explicit connections between the political and territorial relationships constituting different eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century colonial encounters.[2] The most influential of these studies, Richard White's *The Middle Ground*, examines how

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[1] Works highlighting Indian agency and power have become the norm. Perhaps the most influential studies of the past two decades have been Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); and Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). For the Great Lakes region, see, for example, Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); and Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015).

[2] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); DuVal, *Native Ground*.

Natives and European newcomers mingled uncertainly on a diplomatic-cultural middle ground in the geographic middle ground of the Great Lakes country—a region between the populous colonial French and British settlements of the Atlantic and the independent Indigenous nations west of the Mississippi. White paints a compelling picture of an eighteenth-century borderlands political system in which neither Natives nor Europeans could gain an upper hand politically, militarily, or economically. The region's peoples were held together by bumbling French, and, later, British, attempts at mediation as well as the conciliatory or opportunistic diplomatic maneuverings of Native leaders. In effect, the middle ground became a space in which ethnically mixed Indigenous villages met French or British traders, missionaries, habitants, and soldiers on roughly equal footing. On the middle ground, they formed partnerships, alliances, friendships, and other affective connections across cultural difference. White explains, "Perhaps the central and defining aspect of the middle ground was the willingness of those who created it to justify their own actions in terms of what they perceived to be their partner's cultural premises. Those operating in the middle ground acted for interests derived from their own culture, but they had to convince people of another culture that some mutual action was fair and legitimate."[3] Great Lakes nations and French newcomers thus forged productive relationships even as they frequently misunderstood one another's intentions.

Despite White's general attention to environmental change, he deploys the concept of the middle ground primarily to discuss the uneasy relationship between different cultural groups. The biophysical environment of the Great Lakes country and upper Ohio Valley—the literal ground—serves mainly as a stage upon which a more-or-less semiotic political-cultural middle ground played out. Historian Susan Sleeper-Smith offers a useful alternative by "following the

[3] White, *Middle Ground*, 52.

dirt" (or, really, the mud) itself.[4] Her account of the colonial history of the upper Ohio Valley and Lake Erie basin considers the material environment to be constitutive of the region's political arrangements. According to Sleeper-Smith, the living world played a substantive and enduring role in the development of a complex political ecology. While White contends that ethnically diverse peoples forged a hybrid middle ground out of creative misunderstandings and the mutual weakness of French newcomers and Native communities fragmented by the Iroquois Wars (see previous chapter), Sleeper-Smith argues that in the resettled Ohio Valley, "Indian homelands were not territorially distinct, because this rich environment made possible a landscape of highly populated villages with porous borders, inhabited by diverse people…. Fertile landscape niches along the Ohio's tributary rivers sustained a large, diverse population and encouraged compromise, rather than warfare, to define daily interactions."[5] In short, the multiethnic village world that formed in the eighteenth century resulted from resourceful migrants taking advantage of a lush environment rather than fractured peoples desperately trying to knit together a new social order from the carnage left by seventeenth-century warfare.

At the core of Sleeper-Smith's analysis is the Black Swamp itself. This and smaller wetlands harbored large populations of fur-bearing animals.[6] These biologically productive environments formed the ecological heart of a fur trade that "created a prosperous Indian world and encouraged diverse people to band together to form the first Northwestern Indian

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[4] Ellen Stroud, "Does Nature Always Matter? Following Dirt through History," *History and Theory, Theme Issue* 42 (December 2003): 75-81.

[5] Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 9. The implications of Sleeper-Smith's line of thinking are important. She suggests that a landscape of living and nonliving things is internal to social relations rather than external to them. The "imagined communities" of scholarly work on national identity formation must, therefore, treat the creation of imaginaries as material processes as much as ideational or discursive ones.

[6] Ibid., 6.

confederacy that resisted intrusion on their lands."[7] Out of their occupation and control of the fecund landscape, inhabitants of the upper Ohio Valley and Lake Erie region formed multiethnic communities and amassed wealth and power.

While I pay scant attention to the mechanics of the fur trade, the analysis that follows complements Sleeper-Smith's argument. Whereas Richard White sees a French-Algonquian alliance held together by French diplomacy, I argue that in terms of territorial control and material power, even warring bands and internally divided Indian villages exercised a kind of power that the French and, later, the British could only dream of and could never effectively capture or claim as their own. The cohesion provided by the French was ultimately less important than the shared lifeways, practices, and biomes that bound together the many peoples who came to call the Lake Erie basin and upper Ohio Valley home. From this perspective, the eighteenth-century middle ground might rather be considered a Native ground—a physical landscape in which various Indian communities formed kinship bonds, husbanded the resources of important ecosystems, controlled key portages, dominated trade, became prosperous, and set the limits of what was politically possible.

For both the French and the British, powerful Native allies and interlocutors were essential components of any attempt to extend and legitimate the kind of territorial authority that their fellow Europeans would recognize.[8] Even so, European sovereignty was difficult to enact. Indigenous peoples, to the chagrin of the colonial powers that claimed them as allies or partial

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[7] Ibid., 10.

[8] White makes this very point about French weakness and the essential role of the strategic alliance that was "largely Algonquian in form and spirit." Likewise, he describes the post-1763 British presence in the *pays d'en haut* as a "nearly phantom empire." It is, therefore, important not to overstate the differences between his interpretation and that of Sleeper-Smith. Both scholars understand French and British power to be utterly dependent on Indigenous allies. The extent to which Indians were able to impose their will or direct politics may be the point of contention. See White, *Middle Ground*, 142-143 and 354, respectively.

subjects, relentlessly pursued their own interests independent of, and often at odds with, French or British ambitions.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, Native migrants recreated a domesticated landscape that soon stretched across the Ohio Country, far from French forts or English settlements. Indians occupied extensive hunting grounds and strategically located village sites. They enacted this territorial control through world-making practices rooted in environmental attentiveness and flexible modes of subsistence. Native bands maintained political and military control over their lands by utilizing the embodied ecological knowledge that emerged from their seasonal migrations and the corresponding cycles of hunting, foraging, fishing, and farming. And up until the Seven Years' War, the peoples of the Black Swamp willingly suffered the presence of the French and the British because they benefitted from trade and because neither colonial power truly represented a threat to Indian territoriality.

After the war, the British foolishly attempted to assert sovereignty and violence followed. The assertion of Indian control during the bloodshed of the early 1760s halted the encroachment of Anglo-Americans onto much of this Native ground for a brief period. For the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, Indians both established a prosperous multiethnic village world *and* engaged in conflicts—sometimes military, sometimes diplomatic—over who should control that world and how.[9] Critically, the fates of Miamis, Odawas, and Wyandots (Wendats) of the Erie basin diverged from their upper Ohio Shawnee, Delaware, and Ohio Iroquois allies by the early 1770s. Distance from the contested Appalachian borderlands helps to explain why upper Ohio

[9] On the self-sufficiency and prosperity of the multiethnic villages of the eighteenth century, see Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 162-209. On the limited nature of European authority in the Great Lakes, see White, *Middle Ground*; Eric A. Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*; McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*.

peoples eventually found themselves struggling to maintain control of important hunting grounds in the face of settler colonialism while Black Swamp peoples continued to enjoy autonomy and abundance. The vast Lake Erie wetland functioned as a refugium for Indigenous communities as violence accelerated during the 1770s and beyond. For the better part of the eighteenth century, Odawas, Wyandots, Miamis, Delawares, Shawnees, Ohio Iroquois, and their kin and allies successfully occupied a lush countryside in and around the Black Swamp.[10] Indeed, the wetland itself helped to constitute Indigenous power and resistance to colonialism.

From the 1740s until the American Revolution, the French and then the British attempted to establish sovereignty over the inhabitants of the Ohio Country. Both empires sought to lay claim to the productive energies of Indigenous communities. By forming military alliances and seeking to monopolize trade, both empires hoped to secure manpower and lucrative furs. Yet, European efforts to establish formal authority—whether through warfare, ritual, debt, or treaty—generally failed because Indigenous peoples enacted a kind of political independence through their own seasonal migrations and expansive territoriality that was difficult to erode. Peoples of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley formed opportunistic alliances with colonial emissaries and traders, readily adopted European technologies, willingly merged many cultural forms and norms, but remained resolute in their lifeways.

Nevertheless, even French and British failures had important and lasting effects. Efforts to project imperial authority into the Lake Erie basin and upper Ohio Valley subtly introduced the notion that sovereignty (power over people) and property rights (power over land, flora, fauna,

[10] As White so effectively shows, disagreements and divergent policies from one village to another were common among Native nations, as were intra-village divisions. It is, therefore, quite difficult to make blanket claims about the "success" of entire nations. Yet, the growth of Indigenous communities and the effectiveness of armed resistance indicates that Ohio villagers did exercise control over their newly established homelands through much of the eighteenth century. On the complexity of village politics, see White, *Middle Ground*, 186-222.

minerals, and other nonhuman things) were distinct legal and ontological categories. Following the political theorist Timothy Mitchell, I contend that a key mechanism of colonial power was the production and reproduction of this legally codified sovereignty-property dualism. This binary produced a perceptual and physical separation of society from nature, meaning from matter, and law from violence. Sovereignty, in European jurisprudence and political theory, could be extended regardless of property rights, for it entailed submission to the authority of a distant bureaucratic government whose powers appeared to be rooted in universal principles. The right to govern human life could be conceived as a power divorced from materiality (and, thus, violent extirpation). It was a power that could be accessed only by Europeans because of their particular histories of sedentism, monotheism, and state formation. And yet, power over people and power over land could never actually be separated in practice because, at every turn, human lives and landscapes reinforced one another. The management of one necessarily entailed the management of the other.[11]

Ultimately, the extension of European legal theories, rights, and categories required constant self-effacement—a denial of the material relationships that constituted both human life and the very kinds of political power that created the effect of a world divided between humans and things, universals and particulars, sovereignty and property. The naturalization of the sovereignty-property binary constituted a critical form of colonial power that, by the nineteenth century, would become hegemonic. In this chapter, we will glimpse French and British attempts

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[11] On Timothy Mitchell's analyses of the importance of dualisms in colonial schemes and the ways that those dualisms are produced, see Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Mitchell, *Rule of Experts; Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54-119; Mitchell, "Everyday Metaphors of Power," *Theory and Society* 19, no. 5 (October 1990): 545-577; Mitchell, "Afterword: Are Environmental Imaginaries Culturally Constructed?," in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1-34.

to separate sovereignty from property in order to obscure the colonial violence and legal ambiguities and silences that efforts to manage independent Indigenous peoples and secure their lands required.[12]

Tabula Rasa?

The reestablishment of Fort Detroit (Fort Pontchartrain du Détroit) in 1701 after the Great Peace at Montreal signaled renewed French ambitions in the western *pays d'en haut*. Detroit's founder, Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, hoped to secure the western country for the French by concentrating the Native population near Detroit, using that population as a military force to be called upon when necessary, and blocking the British from the region and the trade.[13]

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[12] My argument suggests one further critique of the middle ground thesis, although I do not pursue it in this study. White's work uncovers the interactions—both incidental and choreographed—that constituted the Algonquian-French and (briefly) Algonquian-British middle ground over the course of a century. He reveals that the *boundary objects* of diplomacy, trade, intimate relations, and warfare that made up this cultural world were rarely sites of perfectly equal exchange. During any diplomatic interaction, shared ritual, or private moment, the metaphors, gestures, and symbols used to smooth over difference or produce (mis)understanding likely favored one cultural interpretation over others. Quite often, encounters did not produce hybrid norms and forms, but rather merely illuminated for both parties the unshaken beliefs and values of the other. In this unevenness of middle ground interactions there was always the possibility that hegemonic (in the Gramscian sense) modes of thinking, systems of valuation, or beliefs would emerge. Such subtle forms of social domination may have prevented violent conflict at times, but they also likely eroded and then reconfigured the cultural practices, values, and identities of one group or another. We might ask what elements of the middle ground became hegemonic. How did certain ways of thinking about subjectivity and citizenship, land and property, ethnic or racial identity, debt, or paternalism, become naturalized during sustained interactions? What were the lasting impacts of these most subtle enactments of either Indigenous or colonial power? What forms of violence, domination, or trauma resulted from the hegemonic aspects of cultural and diplomatic exchange? Perhaps the middle ground thesis leaves too little room for robust analyses of cultural hegemony. On the middle ground, see Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Introduction to *The Middle Ground* Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 2006): 3-8; Richard White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings," *WMQ* 63, no. 1: 9-14; Philip J. Deloria, "What is the Middle Ground, Anyway?" *WMQ* 63, no. 1: 15-22; Heidi Bohaker, "'Nindoodemag': The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701," *WMQ* 63, no. 1: 23-52; Brett Rushforth, "Slavery, the Fox Wars, and the Limits of Alliance," *WMQ* 63, no. 1: 53-80; Catherine Desbarats, "Following 'The Middle Ground'," *WMQ* 63, no. 1: 81-96; Michael A. McDonnell, "Rethinking the Middle Ground: French Colonialism and Indigenous Identities in the *Pays d'en Haut*," in *Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 79-108; On hegemony, see Timothy Mitchell's incisive critique of James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* in Mitchell, "Everyday Metaphors of Power." See also Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 312-317.

[13] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 106; Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 283.

However elegant Cadillac's plan looked on paper, French control over the region and its peoples remained illusory.

The arrival of more than a thousand Meskwakis (Fox), Mascoutens, and Kickapoos at the fort in 1710 signified a more direct claim to the land. Although invited to settle at Detroit by Cadillac, the new arrivals had long been enemies of the Odawas and other powerful regional actors. Decades of warfare and the persistent capturing and enslavement of Meskwakis by French-allied Anishinaabeg probably signaled to the Meskwaki-led newcomers that they would not be embraced by Detroit Indians. They came perhaps in search of French mediation.

Yet, upon their arrival, the Meskwaki, Sauk, and Kickapoo leaders boldly proclaimed their right to hunting grounds in what would become southern Michigan and northern Indiana, a region where Odawa, Potawatomi, and Miami claims had been strong in recent decades. Such territorial aggressiveness provoked Anishinaabe leaders, particularly the expansionist Odawas, to call for the elimination of the new arrivals. In late 1711 and early 1712, Odawas and Potawatomis struck Mascouten hunting camps in the Illinois Country. Surviving Mascoutens fled to their kin and Meskwaki allies at Detroit. Led by Meskwaki leaders Laminia and Pemoussa, the bands arrived outside the walls of Fort Detroit in April 1712, angrily calling for revenge and threatening to burn down the poorly guarded outpost.[14] The newly arrived fort commander, Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson, relying on either bad information or poor intuition, believed the English had ordered the Meskwakis and their allies to destroy the fort.[15]

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[14] Jacques-Charles Renaud Dubuisson to Marquis de Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 16, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1902), 268-269.

[15] Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, 268; White, *Middle Ground*, 155.

Fearing that the Meskwakis and Mascoutens would soon be joined by Kickapoos residing near the mouth of the Maumee River, Dubuisson sent out hasty dispatches requesting support from the Anishinaabeg and Wendats.[16] The Anishinaabeg returned from their winter hunts in May and laid siege to the fortified Meskwaki encampment for nearly three weeks. Dubuisson refused to mediate as the siege came to an end, and the Anishinaabeg slaughtered an estimated 1,000 Meskwakis and Mascoutens.[17] Following the end of hostilities at Detroit, many of the Anishinaabeg warriors headed to Michilimackinac. Dubuisson, however, worried that the Maumee Kickapoos would attack Detroit, partly in retribution for the massacre of their allies and partly because of their longstanding tensions with the Odawas and Wendats.[18] Ultimately, these tensions again spread westward into the Illinois country as warfare between the French-allied Indians and the Meskwakis erupted. The Kickapoos subsequently abandoned their beachhead on the lower Maumee while the French responded to the violence by reopening the fur trade and developing a stronger presence in the western country.[19]

As Richard White and other scholars of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Great Lakes have shown, Dubuisson and other French officials made the grave and predictable error of viewing warfare through the lens of European geopolitics, forever unwilling to acknowledge the obvious: they were, at the moment, small players in a larger drama headlined by Native bands pursuing their own political and territorial ambitions. In his report on the origins and outcome of

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[16] Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, 268, 285-286.

[17] Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, 274-286. See also, Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 39; and McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 84.

[18] Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, 286; Father Marest to Marquis de Vaudreuil, June 21, 1712, in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 16, 289.

[19] White, *Middle Ground*, 159. On the Kickapoos' abandonment of the Maumee River, see Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio: An Ethnohistorical Report on the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Chippewa of Northwest Ohio* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1974), 68.

the Meskwaki siege, Dubuisson explained to the governor-general, Pierre de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, that despite his opposition to their encampment in April 1712, the Meskwakis and Mascoutens refused to leave the fort. Worse still, Dubuisson complained, "[they are] never willing to listen to me, speaking always with much insolence, and calling themselves the owners of all the country."[20] It is likely that some of the new arrivals were descendants of the Mascoutens and Kickapoos who, several decades earlier, may have resided around Detroit and along the Maumee and Sandusky rivers before that.[21] After years of conflict and migration, they had returned home to claim their land. The aggressive claims to occupied hunting grounds that enraged the already-hostile Anishinaabeg and Wendats, the establishment of a Kickapoo encampment at the mouth of the Maumee, and this bold assertion of ownership to Dubuisson all suggest that at least some of the new arrivals believed that ancestral occupation conferred a legitimate right to the western Lake Erie country and its bounty. The Anishinaabeg and others disagreed, and violence followed.

This opening vignette of the so-called Fox Wars revealed that ancestral claims broken by decades of absence would not serve as an effective basis for occupation during the era of resettlement, especially if other groups had already come to know and rely upon the land. Surveying both early eighteenth-century violence and acts of accommodation, Richard White concludes that "Whatever distinct homelands these villagers had once possessed, the diaspora provoked by the Iroquois had made irrelevant." Without preexisting land claims to recreate the cultural landscape of a century earlier, White argues, a new multiethnic village world began to

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[20] Dubuisson to Vaudreuil, June 15, 1712, 268.

[21] David M. Stothers, "The Protohistoric Time Period in the Southwestern Lake Erie Region: European-Derived Trade Material, Population Movement and Cultural Realignment," in *Cultures before Contact: The Late Prehistory of Ohio and Surrounding Regions*, ed. Robert A. Genheimer (Columbus: Ohio Archaeological Council, 2000), 73; David M. Stothers, "Indian Hills: A Protohistoric Assistaeronon Village in the Maumee River Valley of Northwestern Ohio," *Ontario Archaeology* 36 (1981), 52.

emerge in the Ohio Country and throughout the Great Lakes.[22] While the overarching point is certainly true—the Ohio Country did become a diverse, multiethnic world in which kinship, alliances, and local politics directed diplomatic and military action—we should resist the assumption that the region was a geopolitical *tabula rasa* after the dispersals of the seventeenth century. As the fate of the Mascoutens at Detroit shows, it took considerable effort, often in the form of bloodshed, to extinguish the collective memories and associated claims to homelands that had survived two or three generations of absence.

South of the Black Swamp, Miamis also claimed ancestral lands, though somewhat more effectively. During the 1690s, the Miami people began a push eastward from the upper Mississippi to their homelands in present-day Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.[23] Settling at the crucial Maumee-Wabash portage at the western edge of the Black Swamp, a large Miami village established control over one of the most important nodes linking the Great Lakes to the Mississippi.[24] With access to the fur of the wetland and control over a critical riverine route, they dominated the fur trade in the western Ohio Valley. From their location at Miamitown (also known as the Miami towns and labeled Kekionga in some accounts), the Miamis could expand further east.[25] In 1747, about three decades into the resettlement of the Ohio Country, around 100 Miami women, men, and children moved from this large community at the western edge of the Black Swamp near the Wabash-Maumee portage (present-day Fort Wayne) to the confluence of

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[22] White, *Middle Ground*, 16-17. Quote on 17.

[23] Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 33; George Ironstrack, "From the Ashes: One Story of the Village of *Pinkwi Mihtohseeniaki*" (MA thesis, Miami University, 2006), 12.

[24] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 57.

[25] Ibid., 136. Sleeper-Smith notes that American maps often labeled Miamitown "Kekionga," "a possible corruption of 'Kiskakon,' the name of an Odawa village that might have been located here before the Miami established control over the Maumee-Wabash portage."

the Great Miami River and Loramie Creek in western Ohio. There, they reestablished a long-abandoned village site, Pickawillany (*Pinkwi Mihtohseeniaki*).[26] Multiple factors encouraged the resettlement of Pickawillany. Historian and Miami language scholar George Ironstrack points out that Pickawillany was strategically located between a French regime that many Native communities viewed as having neglected its obligations to Indigenous allies *and* newly arrived British traders who appeared to be better equipped to supply metal tools, blankets, and other high-demand trade goods. Additionally, the village was positioned along well-established overland trails and a fertile riparian corridor leading to the Ohio River. The location gave residents the chance to maintain self-sufficiency while also placing them in relatively close proximity to their Miami-Illinois kin to the northwest and to Shawnee and Iroquois allies to the east. Just as important, the new village was constructed on the site of an ancestral Miami community, meaning that the settlers arrived with prior knowledge of the landscape and a sense of its historical importance.[27]

The village began promisingly as rebel chief Memeskia (*Meemeeh!ihkia*, also called La Demoiselle) gained power and influence at Pickawillany. The British, encouraged by the growing trade relationship with the Miamis, built a trading post there in 1749.[28] Memeskia's kin connections and the opportunity for trade with the British encouraged several Miami, Wea, and Piankashaw traders to relocate to Pickawillany. During his visit to the village in February 1751, Christopher Gist, acting on behalf of the Ohio Company and the colony of Virginia to establish

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[26] Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 10.

[27] Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 6, 15-23. On Miami motivations and the threat to the Anishinaabeg, see McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 142-146.

[28] For a brief description of Pickawillany in 1749 and mention of the British trader in the village, see Father Bonnecamps, "Account of the voyage on the Beautiful river made in 1749, under the direction of Monsieur de Celoron," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 69 (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Co., 1900), 187.

trade and diplomatic ties with Ohio Valley Delawares, Shawnees, and Miamis, noted that the community "consists of about 400 families, & daily encreasing." Gist described a local landscape teeming with "Turkeys, Deer, Elks and most Sorts of Game particularly Buffaloes, thirty or forty of which are frequently seen feeding in one Meadow." He concluded that the region around the village between the Little Miami and Great Miami rivers "wants Nothing but Cultivation to make it a most delightfull Country."[29] It was little wonder, then, that Pickawillany could support a rapidly growing population.

The village's success not only drew the attention of English traders and diplomats, but also the Anishinaabe-French alliance. During Gist's visit, four Odawa emissaries arrived at Pickawillany to convince the inhabitants to fully return to the French. Memeskia rejected the overtures and announced that his people were prepared to fight and die at Pickawillany if the Odawas desired to pursue war in the spring.[30] The spring attack never came, and the village continued to thrive. However, Pickawillany's steady growth stopped that year. In the span of just a few months between summer 1751 and spring 1752, the villagers faced crop failure, hunger, and a smallpox epidemic.[31]

Finally, in June 1752, an Odawa and Ojibwe war party from Michilimackinac descended on the weakened village. Repeated attempts by the French to bring the village back into the alliance had failed, highlighting French weakness in the region. Unfortunately for Pickawillany, Memeskia's popularity and the perceived alliance with the British worried the powerful Anishinaabeg of the Northern Great Lakes and Detroit. A rival confederacy led by the Miamis

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[29] Christopher Gist, February 17, 1751 in *Christopher Gist's Journals*, ed. William M. Darlington (Pittsburgh, J. R. Weldin, & Co., 1893), 47.

[30] *Gist's Journals*, February 26, 1751, 52-53.

[31] Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 32-33.

with Shawnee and Iroquois allies had the potential to upset the fragile balance of power between Native groups and bring bloodshed back to the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley.[32] The Anishinaabeg war party attacked the village, secured Memeskia's surrender, and quickly executed the chief.[33] This "political assassination," as historian Michael McDonnell rightly labels it, nearly sparked a war between the French and rebel Miamis. However, illness among French soldiers and the collapse of British support for the Miamis helped return the region to the status quo established after the Great Peace.[34] In the aftermath of the attack, Pickawillany inhabitants all but abandoned the village and scattered to towns on the Wabash River or returned to Detroit.[35] Memeskia's assassination forced the British to briefly reconsider maintaining outposts in the Ohio Valley. Indeed, as McDonnell notes, they "fled the region in droves."[36] The people of Pickawillany had lost a risky gambit in the crucible of mid-eighteenth-century borderland politics.

Although one can view the rise and fall of Pickawillany as a story of Indigenous geopolitics, Native-European relations, or escalating French-British hostilities, regional ecologies also played a critical role in the fate of the village. While Memeskia's assassination may have spelled doom for Pickawillany, material conditions in the village had been deteriorating since 1751 and probably contributed to the village's rapid abandonment following the attack. George Ironstrack's analysis of subsistence practices in the years following the site's

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[32] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 146-152.

[33] White, *Middle Ground*, 230-231; McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 152-155.

[34] White, *Middle Ground*, 233.

[35] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 156-159 (quote on 156); White, *Middle Ground*, 231. Ironstrack, questions whether the village was entirely abandoned by 1753, noting that an English captive of the Miamis, Jane Frazier, recounted being brought from her home in western Maryland to the Great Miami River in 1755. Since Pickawillany is the only recorded Miami village on the river during that period, Ironstrack concludes that Pickawillany may have been continuously inhabited or perhaps reestablished once again on the same location. See Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 50-51.

[36] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 156.

occupation in 1747 illuminates the ecological factors that made the move from Miamitown to Pickawillany a potentially dangerous one from the outset. Ironstrack explains that the oak-hickory forests near Miamitown at the western edge of the Black Swamp produced an abundance of acorns and hickory nuts, which fed large wildlife populations as well as the human community. The beech-maple forests along the Great Miami River provided no such sustenance from the trees. And even increased maple sugar production would not have offset the difference between game populations there and those sustained by the oak-hickory assemblage.[37]

Moreover, Pickawillany villagers lacked easy access to the "breadbaskets" of the vast Lake Erie wetland a few days journey to their north. Tubers like tuckahoe, the roots of aquatic plants such as spatterdock, cattail heads and flour made from the plant's starchy rhizomes, and seeds from a variety of wetland plants all provided important sustenance for Native villages at the edges of the Black Swamp. The people of Miamitown relied on such wetland forage to supplement their diets.[38] Unfortunately, no substantial wetland areas existed near Pickawillany. Ironstrack observes that small swamps and riparian bottomlands within a day's journey by foot could have made up for lost access to the Black Swamp. Nevertheless, he concludes, Pickawillany residents "seem to have been at a slight ecological disadvantage when compared to their relatives to the north."[39] This disadvantage may have become significant in 1751 when the maize crop failed and the village was struck by smallpox.[40] Nutritional distress almost certainly increased the disease's virulence. By the time the Odawas and Ojibwes arrived in late spring

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[37] Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 35-37. Ironstrack explains that the labor costs and material overhead for maple syrup production made foraging for acorns a far more calorically sound practice.

[38] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 39-43; Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 42-43.

[39] Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 45.

[40] White, *Middle Ground*, 230; Ironstrack, "From the Ashes," 32-33.

1752, the weakened people of the poorly fortified town had little choice but to surrender Memeskia and little desire to continue the village experiment after his death.

Once again, ancestral land claims proved insufficient when the resettlement of the Ohio Country did not comport with the goals of the Great Lakes alliance, especially the ambitions of the powerful Anishinaabeg. The reoccupation of the lands south of Lake Erie required migrating bands to incorporate themselves into kinship and alliance networks *and* to effectively partner with the other-than-human animals, plants, spirits, and ecosystems on which their lives depended. In short, successful resettlement necessitated the mutual domestication of humans and nonhumans—the meshing of species within a new and fragile ecology governed by a hybrid Indian-European political economy and a verdant, foreboding landscape of dense forests, wetlands, prairies, rivers, and wildlife.

Reterritorialization

The resettlement of the river valleys along the western and eastern borders of the Black Swamp coincided with the occupation of large portions of the upper Ohio Valley by Shawnees, Delawares (Lenape), and western Iroquois groups consisting of Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, Mohawks, and some Susquehannocks (these Iroquois were often labeled "Mingos," a Lenape word indicating untrustworthiness, though I generally refer to them here as Ohio Iroquois). Between the 1720s and 1740s, the entire Ohio Country experienced steady immigration. By midcentury, the region teemed with villages.[41] The reterritorialization allowed communities to maintain political autonomy and benefit from trade relationships with the French, the British, or

[41] White, *Middle Ground*, 187-188; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 40-41; Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 34-41; Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

both. Between the Wabash River and the Appalachian Mountains and Lake Erie and the Ohio, a fertile landscape veined with navigable rivers and short portages offered new arrivals the opportunity to accumulate and exercise material power through trade, diplomacy, and warfare.

While Native villages and French and British forts and trading posts popped up across the region in the first half of the eighteenth century, the Black Swamp itself remained devoid of permanent settlements. Seasonal flooding, dense forests, tangled undergrowth, and impassable marshes dominated most of the wetland. Yet, the same features that made the swamp an unappealing place to carve out a village also created opportunities along its borders for bands looking to maximize food sources or harvest peltries. The temporary Kickapoo-Mascouten encampment at the mouth of the Maumee around 1712 and Miamitown at the strategic Maumee-Wabash portage were among the earliest eighteenth-century settlements to take advantage of the wetland. Settled by Miamis who slowly migrated up the Maumee between 1707 and 1715, Miamitown was the most recent iteration of a long-important village site. With the exception of a smallpox epidemic in the early 1730s, the village experienced steady growth and prosperity until the 1790s.[42]

No additional permanent settlements appear in the written record or on European maps until breakaway Wendats—referred to as "Wyandots" by the British (and henceforth in this study)—arrived near Sandusky Bay along the eastern edge of the Black Swamp in the winter of 1738-39. The move was sparked by intratribal disagreements, long-standing mistrust between the chief allies of the French living near Detroit, a betrayal of the alliance by some Wendats who joined long-time Catawba enemies in an ambush of Detroit Anishinaabeg, and the inability of the

[42] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 146-150.

French to repair the damaged relationships.[43] Led by minor chiefs Angouriot and Orontony (also known as Nicholas), the rebel Wyandots moved to familiar hunting grounds on the lower Sandusky.[44] There, they could exercise independence from Detroit kin who remained loyal to the alliance and, like the Miamis at Pickawillany, establish relations with British traders coming out of Pennsylvania.[45]

In addition to putting space between themselves and the French and opening the possibility of trade with the British, the Wyandot band probably chose the new village site for two reasons. First, its location close to a navigable river (the village was some eight or ten miles from the Sandusky River and a mile or two from Sandusky Bay) in the transition zone between swamp forest to the west and dry prairie and woodlands to the east gave hunters easy access to furs, abundant walleye, and large game, to say nothing of the wetland plants and wild rice widely available along the lower Sandusky.[46] Second, the expansive wetland could blunt potential attacks from the Odawas, who would have to either cross the choppy waters of western Lake Erie or slowly traverse one of the beach ridges or glacial moraines through the swamp if they wanted to attack the village.

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[43] White, *Middle Ground*, 192-196; Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 67-75; Andrew Sturtevant, "'Inseparable Companions' and Irreconcilable Enemies: The Hurons and Odawas at French Détroit, 1701-1738," *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 219-243.

[44] Father Bonnecamps, "Account," 193; White, *Middle Ground*, 195.

[45] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 14-15; White, *Middle Ground*, 201.

[46] Jane L. Forsyth, "A Geologist looks at the Natural Vegetation Map of Ohio," *Ohio Journal of Science* 70, no. 3 (May 1970): 182-183. For wild rice, see James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Colonel James Smith, during his Captivity with the Indians, in the years 1755, '56, '57, '58, and '59* (Lexington, KY: John Bradford, 1799), 31.

For a decade, the palisaded Wyandot village flourished in the marshlands near Sandusky Bay.[47] The British set up a temporary trading post at the bay in 1745, and by 1747 Orontony, the village war leader, renounced the French. Orontony likely considered the effects of the British disruption of the French fur trade during King George's War (1744-48) and estimated that trade with the British would not only be more lucrative, but more stable as well. In concert with British trader, speculator, and Indian agent George Croghan, Orontony began planning to destroy Fort Detroit. The plot did not make it past the early stages of planning, though Wyandot warriors did kill five French traders at Sandusky. Apparently fearing retribution from the Odawas for threatening the alliance by killing traders and concocting a plan to raze Detroit, the Wyandots moved southeast to Conchaké (present-day Coshocton, Ohio) in 1748.[48] That year, French soldiers expelled the British and converted the trading house into a small military outpost called Fort Sandoské.[49] Meanwhile, Orontony died of smallpox in 1750. The intervening years saw alliance tensions lessen as the French expanded their claims to the eastern edges of the Ohio Country. By 1754 Wyandot families at least tentatively returned to the alliance and resettled on

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[47] For a sketch and description of the village in 1754, several years after it was abandoned, see Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, *Journal of Chaussegros de Léry*, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1940), 101.

[48] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 44. For a brief description of the Wyandot town at Conchaké, see *Gist's Journals*, December 14, 1750, 37. For evidence of Wyandot fear and suspicion of the Odawas and relationship with English traders, see *Gist's Journals*., January 4, 1751, 40.

[49] *Gist's Journals*, January 30, 1751, 45.

the south side of Sandusky Bay at a site known as Sunyendeand.[50] Shortly thereafter, they established a second village called Junundat or Canuta a few miles south of the bay.[51]

With the headwaters of the Maumee and lower Sandusky occupied on a more or less permanent basis, it was only a matter of time before the spawning fish and abundant game of the lower Maumee Valley attracted settlers. By the late 1740s, several Detroit Odawas who had also become dissatisfied with the French began scouting the lower Maumee. In 1748, an Odawa band hunting along the river informed Kinousaki, an Odawa war chief loyal to the French, that they were interested in establishing a permanent village at the foot of the rapids, eighteen miles from the river's mouth. Amidst frustrations with high prices and low stock at Detroit, they hoped to distance themselves from the alliance in order to establish a formal trade relationship with the English, much as the rebel Wyandots had done at Sandusky.[52] The furs of the Maumee Valley would facilitate this new relationship. Two years later, the dissatisfied Detroit Odawas still had done nothing more than threaten a permanent move. It is likely that they only intended the rhetoric to induce the French to bring more goods to market and to purchase furs at higher

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[50] Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences*, 26. Andrew Sturtevant argues that we should view the continued existence of Wyandot communities at Detroit and along the Sandusky in the wake of Orontony's death not as a sign of fragmentation and dispersal, but rather as part of a strategy of geopolitical expansion that served the nation well over the coming generation. See Andrew K. Sturtevant, "'Over the Lake': The Western Wendake in the American Revolution," in *From Huronia to Wendakes: Adversity, Migration, and Resilience, 1650-1900*, ed. Thomas Peace and Kathryn Labelle (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 36-38. Whether or not Sturtevant is correct in his analysis of Wyandot politics during the late 1740s, he is clearly right that any previous rifts had been repaired no later than the early 1760s and that the Sandusky Wyandots viewed themselves as part of the same nation as the Detroit Wyandots, though with clear diplomatic autonomy. See, for example, A Conference between Bradstreet and the Wendots, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander C. Flick (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1925), 547-548.

[51] For the location of these two villages, see Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 40-41 (Map 9 inset). Junundat was also known as "Chenunda" or "Canuta." See, respectively, "George Croghan Journal," December 23, 1760, in *Early Western Travels*, vol. 1, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 124, hereafter cited as "Croghan Journal"; and Beverly W. Bond, Jr., ed., "The Captivity of Charles Stuart, 1755-1757," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (June 1926), 70.

[52] "Occurrences in Canada during the year 1747-8," in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 10, ed. E.B. O'Calloghan (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1858), 162.

prices.[53] The 1752 attack on Pickawillany by the Michilimackinac Odawas probably silenced any remaining threats of a break with the French. Nevertheless, temporary hunting camps continued to exist near the lower Maumee rapids throughout the 1740s and 1750s. Regardless of the status of their relationship with the French, the Detroit Odawas and allied nations clearly exercised uncontested control over the hunting lands and resources of the verdant lower Maumee Valley.

Farther upriver, Odawas and their kin established similar encampments at the confluence of the Maumee and one of its tributaries, the Auglaize (Grand Glaize), from at least the 1740s until an Odawa community established a permanent village there in the 1770s.[54] It is possible that the buffalo wallow and salt lick at this confluence was regularly used as a hunting camp much earlier than the 1740s. A 1718 account, most likely by Detroit commandant Jacques-Charles de Sabrevois, states,

> I return to the River of the Miamis. Its entrance from Lake Esrie is very Wide, and on both sides, for a distance of ten Leagues in Ascending, there is nothing but continuous marshes. In these there is at all seasons game without end, especially in autumn and in spring; so that one can not sleep on account of the noise made by the cries of the swans, bustards, geese, ducks, cranes, and other birds. This river is sixty leagues in length, and is very difficult in summer on account of the shallowness of its waters. Thirty leagues up is a place called la glaise [the place of clay], where one always finds wild cattle [bison], who eat the clay and roll in it.[55]

If Sabrevois or other French soldiers, missionaries, traders, or habitants were aware of the mineral lick early in the century, then we can be certain that Indigenous hunters were already regularly taking advantage of the animals' need for nutrients and using the spot for easy hunting.

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[53] Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 92-93.

[54] Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 93; Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaize in 1792: A Composite Indian Community," *Ethnohistory* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1978), 16.

[55] "1718: Memoir on the Savages of Canada as far as the Mississippi River, describing their Customs and Trade," in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 16, 375. Susan Sleeper-Smith identifies the anonymous author of the memoir as Jacques-Charles de Sabrevois. See Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 5.

Although French-allied Native communities and rebel villages alike facilitated the midcentury repopulation of the Black Swamp, the events at Pickawillany in 1752 proved that serious threats to the Anishinaabe-French alliance, including the establishment of new British-facing towns, would be dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly. The Anishinaabe-led coalition had dramatically demonstrated that they could repel at least some British advances into the Ohio Country and bring rebel villages north and west of the Pickaway Plains to heel.[56] It appeared, then, that the French could expand their influence by proxy. However, as they would discover in the 1750s, the territorial control enacted by Indigenous communities and nations did not easily translate into colonial military might.

French Imperial Failures

Despite their limited resources in the West, the French did not rely only on their Native allies. In the 1740s and 1750s, they proactively sought to establish sovereignty over the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley in order to continue claiming the fruits of Indigenous hunters' and trappers' labors. Of course, the alliance with the Anishinaabe, Wyandots, Miamis, and other nations was the chief means by which French influence and access to resources extended across the landscape. In the face of recent British encroachments on both the Indian trade and the lands west of the Appalachians, however, the French needed to stake a direct claim that would be recognized by the British.

[56] The Pickaway Plains, near present-day Circleville, Ohio was home to Shawnee villages. To the east and south of the plains were Shawnee, Delaware, and "Mingo" (Seneca-Cayuga/Ohio Iroquois) communities, which, for a time, sought an alliance with the British against the French. This alliance never materialized, as the British policy followed that of Virginia. For their part, the Virginians worked tirelessly to gain land cessions in the upper Ohio Valley from the Haudenosaunees, who they believed controlled the region and its residents. By 1754, the villages that had sought support from the British nominally returned to the French alliance. On the complex politics of these Ohio rebels, see White, *Middle Ground*, 237-245.

In the summer of 1749, French-Canadian military officer Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville revealed the extent of French anxiety over both Ohio Indians' haughty independence and British colonists' and traders' frustrating incursions into the Ohio Valley. After French soldiers had driven British traders from Sandusky in the wake of Orontony's planned attack on Detroit, most of the western and central Lake Erie watershed lacked any noticeable English presence. So, the governor of Canada, the Marquis de La Galissonière, quickly turned his attention south to the contested upper Ohio Valley where Virginia land speculators under the auspices of the recently formed Ohio Company had been granted a royal charter of 500,000 acres south and east of the Ohio.[57] The governor dispatched Céloron to remove remaining English traders still operating in the region and ceremonially claiming the valley for France.

With a force of 216 French and Canadian men and about thirty Haudenosaunee and Abenaki allies, Céloron's expedition entered the mouth of Chautauqua Creek in mid-July and followed a riverine route to the headwaters of the Ohio.[58] Upon arriving at the Ohio on July 29, Céloron "had a leaden plate buried on which was engraved the taking possession which I made, in the name of the King, of this river and of all those which fall into it. I had also attached to a tree the arms of the King, struck on a plate of sheet iron, and of all this I drew up an official statement." The statement (and plate engraving) proclaimed:

> In the year one thousand seven hundred and forty-nine, we Celoron, Knight of the Royal Military Order of St. Louis, Captain commanding a detachment sent by the orders of M. the Marquis de la Galissoniere, Governor-General of New France, on the Beautiful River, otherwise called the Oyo, accompanied by the principal officers of our detachment, buried at the foot of a red oak, on the southern bank of the river Oyo and of Kanaougon, and at 42° 5' 23", a leaden plate, with this inscription thereon engraven: 'In the year 1749, in the reign of Louis the XV, King of France, we. Celoron, commander of the detachment sent by M. the

[57] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 36-37.

[58] Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville, "Céloron's Journal," in *Expedition of Céloron to the Ohio Country in 1749*, ed. C. B. Galbreath (Columbus, OH: The F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1921), 13-17.

> Marquis de la Galissoniere, Governor-General of New France, to reestablish peace in some villages of these Cantons, have buried this plate at the confluence of the Ohio and the Kanaaiagon, the 29th of July, for a monument of the renewal of possession which we have taken of the said river Ohio, and of all those which fall into it, and of all the territories on both sides as far as the source of the said rivers, as the preceding Kings of France have possessed or should possess them, and as they are maintained therein by arms and by treaties, and especially by those of Riswick, Utrecht and of Aix la Chapelle; have moreover affixed to a tree the arms of the King. In testimony whereof, we have drawn up and signed the present written record. Made at the entrance of the Beautiful River, the 29th of July, 1749. All the officers signed.[59]

The ritual was repeated at intervals along the river. The burial of engraved lead plates, the hanging of the king's coat of arms on a nearby tree, and the recording of the event along with geographical coordinates were intended to confer or "renew" French "possession" of the territory by a kind of European alchemy. As historian R. Douglas Hurt describes it, "This action introduced the concept of European land ownership and sovereignty to Ohio."[60]

More to the point, the ritual enacted territorial control at the level of European geopolitics—creating a kind of paper (and lead) sovereignty—and positioned Ohio Valley Indians as French dependents. Sovereignty appeared here as an abstract power divorced from sustained engagement with the landscapes now being claimed. In other words, within European legal thought and practice, ownership of land and imperial control over people were to be conceived as separate powers. European nation-states had inherited from Roman law this longstanding of property from sovereignty. While feudal arrangements largely abandoned Roman models during the Middle Ages, the emergent fiscal-military states of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries re-inscribed the distinction between *imperium* (sovereignty, or control over people and borders) and *dominium* (control over land and its resources) through rights and

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[59] Ibid., 17-18.

[60] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 36.

obligations codified in the law.[61] For the moment, this distinction worked to mask French weakness, for the French controlled little ground and few resources. Their settlements stretched along the St. Lawrence River and some of its tributaries, around western forts like Detroit, and up the lower Mississippi River from New Orleans.[62] Beyond the immediate hinterlands of towns and forts, and some notable agricultural settlements, they were largely dependent on Indigenous allies. And even within the colonial settlements, the French relied on the expertise and skill of Native peoples to navigate the flora, fauna, and landscapes of their new home.[63] But to the eyes of fellow Europeans, rituals like burying plates, displaying royal coats of arms, and circulating literary inscriptions of the ceremonies all denoted a legitimate claim to geographic space and the peoples and resources contained within.

Although Ohio Country inhabitants might possess property rights and political autonomy constrained only by obligations to kin and allies, the status of Indigenous sovereignty was somewhat unclear. On the one hand, Native nations, villages, and bands clearly operated independently of the French or British. On the other hand, Indians did not customarily make use of European writing technologies, had generally not mastered European legal theories, and were not European. In other words, they lacked substantive access to a realm of governance and mode of political power central to French or British colonizing schemes. And because sovereignty is more easily stated than enacted, the precise relationship between independent peoples and the

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[61] Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires, and Land in Early Modern North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 11-18. See also Morris R. Cohen, "Property and Sovereignty," *Cornell Law Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1927-1928): 8-30.

[62] This is not to minimize French colonial territorial expansion. See Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 145-188, 298-305, 368-375.

[63] On the ecologies and vulnerabilities of French colonialism, see Christopher Parsons, *A-Not-So-New-World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

empires that claimed some degree of authority over them was subject to on-the-ground negotiation as well as prevailing European interpretations of Indigenous Americans' level of civilizational advancement and closely related notions of racial difference. According to legal historian Stuart Banner, "The continual assertion of sovereignty was based on an assumption of white superiority that was uncontroversial among whites at the time." Consequently, Banner explains, "the assertion of sovereignty over a given area occupied by Indians normally preceded, sometimes by quite a long time, the acquisition of the Indians' property rights in that area."[64]

Ultimately, the power of the French (or British) to enact sovereignty in new places depended, in part at least, on the bifurcation of political authority into control over resources and control over people—property ownership and sovereignty, *dominium* and *imperium*. Conceptualizing sovereignty as abstract and separate from property rights and relationships enabled claims of sovereignty to survive more easily since they depended less on martial power and more on mastery of European political philosophy or international diplomacy.[65] An empire did not have to secure military or bureaucratic control before laying claim to a place and its peoples. In the Great Lakes, French sovereignty could be extended through a kind of imperial doublespeak in which colonial operatives worked to maintain the alliances constituting the middle ground and simultaneously performed rituals of sovereignty, as exemplified by Céloron's expedition.[66] Native groups thus maintained their lands and lifeways while the European colonial

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[64] Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 7. For more on the production of racial difference in this particular colonial context, see Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 179-183, 189-191, 199-208.

[65] My argument here and throughout this section is indebted to Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 54-79; and Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 283-291, 389-397.

[66] White, *Middle Ground*; Michael Witgen, "The Rituals of Possession: Native Identity and the Invention of Empire in Seventeenth-Century Western North America," *Ethnohistory* 54, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 639-668.

governments that depended on them claimed their current or future labor, resources, or land through trade relationships and European geopolitics. Indigenous peoples were to be both economic-military partners *and* subjects of French imperial authority. This ambiguous relationship to empire was calculated rather than incidental. As Ann Laura Stoler has noted, "agents of imperial rule have invested in, exploited, and demonstrated strong stakes in the proliferation of geopolitical ambiguities."[67] In this case, the bifurcation of governmental authority and the resulting ambiguity meant that there was generally no need to impinge on the land rights of Native communities, a fact which reduced the likelihood of conflict between colonial administrators and the peoples who were now blanketed by French claims of sovereignty.[68]

In practice, property and sovereignty were bound together.[69] For the French, securing the fur trade meant controlling the Black Swamp and other beaver, mink, and muskrat habitats as well as the labor of hunters and, by extension, their kin. Céloron's expedition sought to claim all the productive energies, whether human or not, that enabled the fur trade. Indeed, the engravings

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[67] Ann Laura Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," *Public Culture* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2006), 139-140.

[68] Once again, it is important to note that the French imperial state and settler colonists did encroach on Native lands, especially in the granting of seigneurial estates in and around the St. Lawrence Valley. See footnote 62 above.

[69] My analysis differs from scholars who regard property and sovereignty to be two functionally distinct categories. Those researchers are, of course, correct insofar as the law erects such a distinction and seeks to create a self-referential system in which this distinction can be maintained. However, because no ontological difference exists between the power over people and the power over things, we might be inclined to regard the sovereignty-property (or human-nature) binary as a false one. Yet, as Timothy Mitchell has so effectively argued, while it may be true that the binary is false, it is more accurate and analytically useful to regard the boundary between such categories as *artifactual*. The binary is not so much false as it is *made*. The creation and maintenance of the binary allowed European sovereignty to appear universal, rational, and mobile—existing above and outside of the local and particularistic property claims of Native bands. The sovereign power of the European nation-state, consecrated by seemingly natural and universal law, could then be deployed to implement a private property system that would appear similarly abstract, rational, and universal, existing in marked contrast to Indigenous property regimes. See Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 355-359; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 55-59, 70-71, 76-79; and Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004), 1-23. Contra Banner, *How the Indians Lost their Land*.

on the lead plates indicated as much when they announced the expedition's goal of reestablishing peace in restive villages while at the same time declaring exclusive European political rights to the Ohio River and its tributaries. The French sought to fix imperial borders and simultaneously work to manage the people and resources contained within through disjointed, though often effective, diplomatic maneuvering.[70]

Ultimately, the French toiled in vain. Weaker than their Native allies and the British, the assassination of the Pickawillany chief Memeskia in 1752 and French pretentions to regional hegemony amplified the festering imperial struggle with Great Britain. The assassination may have helped to temporarily reinvigorate and stabilize the Indigenous-French alliance, but it also immediately intensified the French-British conflict over the Ohio Country. The murder of a British trader during the Odawa attack on the village eventually led a Virginia militia commanded by Major George Washington to enter "French" territory near the headwaters of the Ohio River and engage French forces in a short battle.[71] Hostilities escalated and the resulting Seven Years' War witnessed the permanent defeat of the French in North America and the expansion of the British Empire.[72] For Native peoples living between Lake Erie and the Ohio,

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[70] Following Bruno Latour, I contend that the production and continual maintenance of this distinction between sovereignty and property, ideality and materiality, society and nature, or the universal and the particular in European jurisprudence actually depended on the existence of material-political relationships that obeyed no separation between these seemingly opposed categories. The extractive *raison d'être* of European imperialism relied on the always already existing entanglement of humans and nonhumans (as in the fur trade). Likewise, the extension of European sovereignty through rituals like the planting of lead plates was a simultaneously material and semiotic enactment of sovereignty (a "hybrid" of matter and meaning). Such rituals were attempts to manage nonhuman things as well as humans—property as well as sovereignty. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10-12; and Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 358-379.

[71] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 162-165.

[72] The best account of the North American theater of the Seven Years' War remains Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

this was the beginning of a bloody sixty-year struggle for control of the region, fought first against the British and later against the aggressively settler-colonial United States.[73]

Distance alone spared most inhabitants of western Lake Erie the worst effects of the war. The opening acts of the conflict unfolded in the Ohio Valley, first at Pickawillany and then in a series of battles near Fort Duquesne, as well as far to the east in New York and Quebec. Warriors from Detroit and the Black Swamp raided frontier settlements in the upper Ohio and contributed in major battles near Fort Duquesne. In the summer of 1755, the French-allied Indians crushed General Edward Braddock's expeditionary force ten miles from the fort. Three years later, in September 1758, warriors from the Lake Erie basin helped to defeat John Forbes' advance party marching upon Duquesne. Following this last victory, most of the Indian combatants returned home with considerable plunder from the battlefield and moved their families to winter encampments.[74] For half a decade, seasons of raiding and warfare had punctuated annual rhythms of subsistence and community care for the peoples of the Black Swamp. But the 1758 season proved to be the last for the French alliance in the Ohio Country. Sensing French weakness, and perhaps tiring of bloodshed, the Ohio peoples largely abandoned the French before the end of the year.[75] The loss of Native allies at Duquesne early in the fall doomed the French in the region. Facing the approach of Forbes' main body of 6,000 troops in October, the French razed and abandoned the fort, giving the British an opening to claim the Ohio Valley.

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[73] For a brief summary of the Sixty Years' War, see David Curtis Skaggs, "The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814: An Overview," in *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*, ed. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 1-20. The conflict is also described in detail in White, *Middle Ground*, 223-523; and Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). It is worth noting that many upper Ohio Valley villages also plotted against the French prior to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. Consequently, one could trace this anticolonial struggle back to the 1740s, as Dowd does.

[74] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 57-58.

[75] White, *Middle Ground*, 245-256.

To be sure, the villages of western Lake Erie had been insulated from the worst effects of the conflict for more than six years. In fact, they often benefitted from military expeditions that offered their warriors the chance to weaken frontier settlements by stealing livestock and personal property and incorporating those stolen animals and objects into their own communities. Now, however, they would find their geopolitical world significantly altered after the siege of Quebec in 1759 and subsequent French capitulation.

British Imperial Weakness

Following the end of hostilities, British soldiers occupied the French forts, including Detroit, and claimed sovereignty over most of eastern North America.[76] But, as with the French, sovereignty was difficult to enact. Bold assertions of political authority by British officials were met with coordinated Indian resistance. For the often ill-provisioned British to succeed, they would have to successfully recruit military allies or engage in shrewd diplomacy. They would attempt both in the 1760s with varying degrees of success.

First, however, the British ignored the lessons of earlier French diplomacy and foolishly escalated tensions. Under the leadership of General Jeffery Amherst, the British Army ended the practice of gift giving and curtailed independent traders, souring the relationships that had more-or-less successfully held together the fragile Indian-French alliance for close to a century.[77]

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[76] Ibid., 271. White contends that the British takeover of former French outposts and their claims to sovereignty signified "the failure of the Indians to create a confederacy that would prevent British occupation of the region." It is true that Indian unity would prove somewhat elusive until the existential threat posed by Anglo-American settlers combined with the racism and genocidal logic of Indian hating between the 1760s and 1780s. On the transfer of sovereignty from France to Great Britain, see Treaty of Paris (1763), art. IV and VII, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris763.asp (accessed October 15, 2019).

[77] White, *Middle Ground*, 257-261; Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 70-75; McConnell, *Country Between*, 159-167. On Indians' and British traders' mutual disappointment at this change, see Captain Robert Calendar to Colonel Henry Bouquet, May 23, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald

Nevertheless, commerce between the forts and Indians continued. This was most fortunate for British soldiers. At Detroit, the winter of 1760-61 brought provisioning challenges. Flour requisitioned from Fort Presque Isle (present-day Erie, Pennsylvania) in late autumn was damaged en route. Only corn sold by the French trader and Anishinaabe ally Robert Navarre and venison supplied by Indian hunting parties saved the vulnerable Detroit garrison.[78]

The supply problems at Detroit were worrisome enough that Captain Donald Campbell suggested constructing a fort at Sandusky Bay. He explained to Colonel Henry Bouquet that "A Small Post at the litle lake or Sandusky, would be of great use for the Communication with Pittsburgh. It is only Thirty Leagues from this [Detroit], and they can goe from this to that all the winter; but to goe round by land the One end of the Lake [Erie] is very bad road for horses in winter."[79] The fort, Campbell imagined, would more effectively connect Detroit to eastern outposts and settlements by linking the lake and overland supply routes at a defensible stopover that circumvented the Black Swamp entirely.

Just as important, Campbell hoped to protect and control the licensed traders already operating near the villages on the lower Sandusky and extend British influence in the area. With rumors of unrest among the Indians swirling around Detroit in the spring of 1761, Campbell expected open rebellion. Fearing that Indians would slaughter the traders and steal their goods, and lacking the resources to send adequate protection, he recalled them to Detroit in June.[80]

H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), 168; and Lieutenant William Hamback to Bouquet, May 24, 1761 *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, 171.

[78] Captain Donald Campbell to Bouquet, December 11, 1760, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21645, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), 223.

[79] Ibid., 225; and Campbell to Bouquet, June 1, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, 183.

[80] Campbell to Bouquet, June 16, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, 210; Captain Gavin Cochrane to Bouquet, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, 222; Campbell to Bouquet, June 27, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21646, 230.

Although the expected violence never arrived, Detroit's relative isolation made the threat of communication breakdown and Indian rebellion a frightening enough proposition that Amherst agreed to the construction of an outpost at Sandusky. In late summer 1761, Bouquet instructed Lieutenant Elias Meyer to build "a Small Blockhouse with a Pallissade round it, to serve as a Halting Place for our Partys going & coming to and from Detroit."[81] Fort Sandusky was to be erected near the site of the old Fort Sandoské, which had been abandoned by French soldiers around 1754 but had remained a seasonal trading post and mission for the next few years.[82]

Sandusky Wyandots viewed the construction of Fort Sandusky as a British attempt not just to replace the French, but to exercise more direct control over the region, its peoples, and their trade relationships.[83] Ensign H.C. (Christopher) Pauli, who took command of Sandusky after Meyer was recalled to Fort Pitt, noted in a February 1762 letter to Bouquet that the residents of "Coonuduth" (Junundat) were unhappy with the construction of the fort. One village leader informed Pauli that he would have the fort burned to the ground in the spring when his hunters returned.[84] And while no attack on the blockhouse occurred that year, the fort would be the first to fall in the violence of 1763.

A combination of poor trade relations, British officers' general disrespect for Native leaders, and the threat of colonial settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains encouraged the

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[81] Bouquet to Lieutenant Elias Meyer, August 12, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21653, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Leo J. Roland (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1940), 77.

[82] Chaussegros de Léry, *Journal*, 54, 69, 72, 79.

[83] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 79.

[84] Ensign H.C. Pauli to Bouquet, February 19, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. I, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 33.

Detroit Odawas, led by the war chief Pontiac, and Native bands throughout the Ohio Country to take up arms against the British in the spring of 1763.[85] Perhaps surprisingly, Detroit and Ohio peoples were the first to go to war while their allies in Pennsylvania, who were under more immediate threat of dispossession, sought legal mediation of land disputes through the colonial government. Historian Gregory Evans Dowd has concluded that this anticolonial struggle "was not an inevitable conflict pitting expansionist Anglo-American farmers against Native American defenders of the soil. The first issue was not land but authority and submission."[86] In other words, the concern among Odawas, Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Iroquois was subjection to British sovereignty more than loss of land.

Dowd's analysis fails to interrogate the previously noted bifurcations created by European law—namely, the apparent distinction between property and sovereignty. We might, therefore, take his insight a step further to acknowledge that conflicts over the control of land, or dominion, were invariably intertwined with concerns over imperial power and forced submission. The loss of land, Pennsylvania Indians understood, would sever the material relationships necessary to muster military or diplomatic resistance to imperial authority. They fought for land rights—the source of the materials and relationships that granted them a degree of political autonomy from European empires—in the most direct way possible: through the

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[85] For a concise overview of Pontiac's War, see Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 48-53. For recent comprehensive analyses of the conflict, see Dowd, *War Under Heaven*; David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); Richard Middleton, *Pontiac's War: Its Causes, Course, and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2007). On high prices and poor trade relations, see McConnell, *Country Between*, 161-162. On British disrespect, see Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 63-77; and Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 43-46. On English settlements west of the Appalachians, see Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 78-83.

[86] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 82.

Pennsylvania judicial system.[87] Unlike Pennsylvania, though, no local adjudication was possible in the Ohio Country. In the Indian lands between Lake Erie and the Ohio, British authority arrived at this moment not in the form of colonial elites, settler-colonists, and the juridical institutions of their creation, but rather as imperial military officials and their apparently universal claims of sovereignty.

Ohio Indians understood that signs of disrespect, anemic trade, and British assumptions about territorial control constituted a unified assault on their political independence. Lacking other options, they went to war and, like their Pennsylvania counterparts, fought for redress against the most visible source of their misery—in this case the forts that allowed the British to arrogantly claim authority over the land and its inhabitants. Questions of personal/collective submission and territorial dominion were always bound together. This was especially true for pantheistic peoples whose beliefs, identities, social organization, land-use practices, intervillage and intertribal alliances, and very survival depended simultaneously on independence from centralizing (and sedentarizing) government *and* the ability to engage in extensive land use. Ultimately, in both Pennsylvania legal battles and Ohio warfare, Indigenous peoples surely regarded issues of authority/submission and land to be one and the same.

At the outset of what would become known as "Pontiac's War," Detroit Odawas and their Anishinaabe kin laid siege to Detroit, but were unable to dislodge the British garrison inside.[88] From the edges of the Black Swamp, the Wyandots launched an attack on the offending Fort Sandusky, which quickly fell in mid-May after four Wyandots and three Ottawas entered the fort under the pretense of wanting to speak with Ensign Pauli. After smoking with the commander for

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[87] Depending on perspective, such uses of the colonizing power's judicial system can, of course, be understood as evidence of either the hegemonic power of colonial law or the artful resistance of Native peoples.

[88] White, *Middle Ground*, 287; Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 118-136.

a time, one of the Wyandots gave a signal and they quickly killed the entire garrison including British traders and took Pauli hostage.[89] Throughout the summer a series of similar attacks wiped the region clean of the smaller British outposts, and very nearly cut off Detroit from the forts in the east.[90] However, in June and July, gunboats sailed across Lake Erie and reinforced the fort on its Detroit River flank. In retaliation for the murder of the soldiers at Sandusky, one ship carrying British troops to Detroit stopped at Sandusky and destroyed the already abandoned Junundat, burning the village and the surrounding fields of corn.[91] Even with the arrival of such eager reinforcements, the British failed to scatter the Odawas encamped a few miles from Detroit. At the end of July, Pontiac's fighters repulsed an ill-conceived British attack on their village. As summer turned to autumn, the warriors continued their aggressive posture.[92] The siege finally collapsed in October when it became clear that the Native confederacy would not be aided by the French soldiers and traders who remained in the Illinois Country.[93]

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[89] "Extract of a court enquiry held by order of Major Henry Gladwin to enquire into the manner of the taking of the forts St. Dusky, St. Josephs, Miamis and Presque Isle, July 6, 1763," reprinted in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 27 (Lansing: Robert Smith Printing Co., 1897), 638.

[90] On Pauli's capture and the killing of the rest of the soldiers, see A.T. Volwiler, ed., "William Trent's Journal at Fort Pitt, 1763," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11, no. 3 (December 1924), 394; and "John Rutherford's Narrative of a Captivity," in *The Siege of Detroit in 1763*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1958), 241. On the severing of communication between Fort Detroit and Fort Pitt, see Bouquet to General Jeffery Amherst, June 16, 1763, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1940), 189. Bouquet writes, "The communication from F: Pitt to the Detroit by Sandusky, appears to me impracticable during a War with the Savages from the too great Distance, through a country full of Swamps and cut by Rivers and Creeks some of which are seldom fordable."

[91] On the destruction of the Wyandot village of Junundat, see "Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy," in *The Siege of Detroit in 1763*, 201; Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 108-109; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 51.

[92] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 131-137.

[93] Ibid., 138-139.

After negotiating a truce of sorts and harvesting their crops, Pontiac's followers moved to the lower Maumee at the edge of the Black Swamp, some 70 miles from Detroit.[94] This strategic relocation put distance between the Odawas and the British, and gave them easy access to the hunting grounds in and around the expansive swamp forest. Along with some Anishinaabe kin, they would remain in a cluster of wetland-protected Maumee villages until removal began nearly 75 years later.

In late 1763 and 1764, sporadic fighting continued across the upper Ohio Valley and throughout the Great Lakes, as Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Iroquois attacked border settlements.[95] Amherst, like many Pennsylvania and Virginia colonists, favored forced submission or outright genocide to end the hostilities and secure the country. Infamously, he and Bouquet discussed trying to spread smallpox among the belligerents during negotiations. Bouquet notified Amherst of the outbreak of smallpox at Fort Pitt on June 23.[96] In a memorandum to Bouquet on July 7, 1763, Amherst wrote, "Could it not be contrived to Send the Small Pox among those Disaffected Tribes of Indians? We must, on this occasion, Use Every Stratagem in our power to Reduce them."[97] Bouquet, writing from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, responded on July 13, "I will try to inoculate the [Indians] with Some Blankets that may fall in their hands, and take Care not to get the disease myself. As it is a pity to expose good men

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[94] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 139; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 50-51.

[95] McConnell, *Country Between*, 190-196.

[96] On the outbreak, see Simeon Ecuyer to Bouquet, June 16, 1763, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21649, pt. 1, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 153. For Bouquet's letter notifying Amherst of the outbreak, see Bouquet to Amherst, July 23, 1763, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 196.

[97] Memorandum by Sir Jeffery Amherst, July 7, 1763 [incorrectly dated May 4, 1763], *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 161. On the incorrect dating and for an important analysis of the events, see Elizabeth Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (March 2000), 1555-1557.

against them I wish we would use the Spanish method to hunt them with English Dogs, supported by Rangers and Some Light Horse, who would I think effectively remove or extirpate the vermin."[98] Then on July 23, Amherst responded once again, "You will Do well to try to inoculate the Indians, by means of Blankets, as well as to Try Every other Method, that can Serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race.—I should be very glad your Scheme for Hunting them down by Dogs could take Effect."[99]

Apparently operating independently of Bouquet and Amherst, trader William Trent and Captain Simeon Ecuyer, the commander at Fort Pitt, actually attempted to spread the virus to Ohio Indians. Trent distributed blankets taken from smallpox-infected patients at the fort to two Delaware emissaries on June 24. The Delawares, Turtle's Heart and Mamaltee, arrived at the fort to warn the British of approaching Indians and to urge them to leave the outpost at once. "Out of our regard to them," Trent wrote, apparently delighting in his own cruelty, "we gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital."[100] The historical record does not reveal additional attempts to purposely spread the disease in the wake of Bouquet and Amherst's correspondence, nor does it indicate that Amherst played any role in Trent and Ecuyer's actions. Nevertheless, as historian Elizabeth Fenn observes, "Had Jeffery Amherst known of these actions, he certainly would have approved."[101] Fenn also notes that it is possible that Trent and Ecuyer actually "acted on some earlier communication from Amherst that does not survive

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[98] Bouquet to Amherst, July 13, 1763, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 215.

[99] Memorandum by Sir Jeffery Amherst, July 16, 1763 [incorrectly dated May 4, 1763], *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 161. Once again, on the incorrect dating, see Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America," 1555-1557.

[100] Volwiler, ed., "William Trent's Journal," 400.

[101] Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America," 1554.

today."[102] Smallpox, she concludes, may have been a useful and more widespread weapon of war than historians are able to verify.[103] Because the origins of the disease could never be positively ascertained, spreading the virus would have been a common, effective, and low-stakes method of dealing with Indigenous peoples who were dangerous as enemies, useful (if unpredictable) as allies, and manageable as diminished populations. Death by disease would not necessarily rouse anger or suspicion and might weaken Native communities to the point where they renounced warfare and sought alliance with Great Britain.

The provenance of the smallpox outbreak may or may not have been Fort Pitt and Trent's infected "gifts." Indeed, there might have been multiple sources of infection in the upper Ohio Valley. What we do know, however, is that the virus ravaged many communities in the region between the summer of 1763 and at least early 1765, and the timing of the outbreak suggests that the biological attack very well might have been successful.[104] Jeffrey Ostler and other historians examining the evidence of the Fort Pitt smallpox blankets have rightly pointed out that this example of germ warfare was a sign of British genocidal intent against the Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley.[105] We should also recognize this as clear evidence that the British fully understood their profound weakness in the region and sought to turn the tables by recruiting a deadly and uncontrollable ally.

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[102] Ibid., 1558.

[103] Ibid., 1564-1565.

[104] Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America,", 1557; McConnell, *Country Between*, 195-196.

[105] Jeffrey Ostler, "'To Extirpate the Indians': An Indigenous Consciousness of Genocide in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes, 1750s-1810," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 2015), 599-600; and Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 36-37.

By enrolling blankets, a handkerchief, and a virus in the war effort, Ecuyer, Trent, and the inhabitants of Fort Pitt desperately sought to magnify their collective power in the face of more powerful enemies. The Variola virus might function as a microscopic force multiplier, striking silently and spreading amongst warriors and noncombatants alike. The trouble, of course, was that smallpox could only ever be partially recruited. Like many other-than-human objects and forces, smallpox might be deployed at a specific enemy, but ultimately its material qualities—its liveliness—meant that it could never be domesticated. Borne through the world by human bodily fluids and contaminated objects, the opportunistic virus may or may not travel where ruthless British officers desired. Blankets and handkerchiefs might not harbor the disease and Indigenous villages might be spared. Nor could those who unleashed smallpox prevent the virus from indiscriminately colonizing and ravaging soldiers' bodies. Bouquet had very reasonably worried that he might contract the disease if he were to handle infected blankets. Smallpox could fail to transmit to the intended targets, or it could infect and kill those who had attempted to unleash it. Ultimately, Ecuyer and Trent's intentions could not be easily translated into effective action. Smallpox might operate alongside and in concert with the British, but the alliance, such as it was, would always be profoundly unstable and temporary.[106] Variola's

[106] My interpretation here builds from actor-network theory (ANT), which examines how associations between heterogeneous things (whether human or nonhuman, living or nonliving, material or semiotic) are formed, solidified, and mobilized through acts of "translation." By insisting on a flat ontology (and analytics), the methods of ANT suggest that viruses like Variola can be considered accomplices or partners of colonialism—one among many "portmanteau biota" (to use Alfred Crosby's term) that were knowingly or unknowingly recruited by colonizers and that enabled the European conquest of the Americas. At the same time, ANT asks that we understand viruses and other biotic and abiotic actants to be just as easily enrolled in other endeavors that might disrupt colonial projects. See Michel Callon, "Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay," in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. John Law (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 196-233; John Law, "On the Methods of Long-Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation and the Portuguese Route to India," in *Power, Action and Belief*, 234-263; Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); John Law, "Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics" (version of April 25, 2007), http://www.heterogeneities.net/publications/Law2007 ANTandMaterial Semiotics.pdf (accessed April 12, 2020); Bruno Latour, "On actor-network theory. A few clarifications plus more than a few complications," *Soziale Welt* 47,

potential usefulness and obvious danger to its handlers reveals that desperate British strategists and vulnerable soldiers and traders were willing to make a potentially deadly Faustian bargain for a chance at killing a formidable enemy.

The British had two reasons for believing that such a potentially hazardous alliance with Variola would work in their favor. First, it was well understood that those who survived smallpox were granted lifelong immunity, and more British soldiers had endured the ravages of the disease than Ohio Indians. Second, it often appeared that Indigenous communities suffered greater rates of mortality from epidemic diseases than other groups. Although the reason was not clearly understood at the time, we now know that Native peoples were often made more vulnerable to illness by hunger, warfare, and trauma. In other words, occasionally when pestilence arrived on foot or horseback, it did so in the wake of famine, war, and death.[107] Moreover, more recent immunological research suggests that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas possess relatively homogeneous adaptive immune systems. Researchers believe that it is possible that this homogeneity might have increased the virulence of some diseases, resulting in a greater number of deaths than might otherwise be expected.[108]

However, many Ohio peoples had also recruited other-than-human allies that proved quite up to the task of insulating them from the designs of British soldiers and traders. The

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no. 4 (1996): 369-381; and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. 27-86.

[107] David S. Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October 2003), 735-736. On the role of trauma specifically, see Timothy J. LeCain's discussion of epigenetics and the relatively recent hypothesis that trauma, violence, and other environmental factors might influence potentially heritable gene expression and immune responses in LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 95-99.

[108] Specifically, Native American populations lack diversity in major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules, which dictate the antigen presentation on cell surfaces that trigger the adaptive immune response. See Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," 731-732; and Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 26-27.

geography of the Ohio Valley and Lake Erie basin sheltered Sandusky and Maumee villages from being constantly overrun by smallpox and other crowd diseases like pertussis and measles. As Susan Sleeper-Smith explains, pathogens often failed to colonize communities because contact with outsiders carrying these viruses was somewhat limited. The Appalachian Mountains narrowed contact from the east to particular geographic choke points, while the direction of the rivers along with sheer distance protected inhabitants from Spanish incursions from the lower Mississippi. Border nations tended to receive the brunt of exposure to diseases—the Shawnees near the Cumberland Gap, the Haudenosaunees near the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, and the Illinois Confederacy around the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio. Miamis, Weas, Odawas, Potawatomis, Wyandots, and allied peoples living farther up the tributaries of the Ohio and within the Erie basin were able to stay away from Shawnee, Iroquois, or Illinois "gatekeeper villages" when illness was prevalent.[109] Just as important as distance, Sleeper-Smith notes, was the year-round availability of food in and around the Black Swamp.[110] Combined with Ohio peoples' uncontested political control of most of the country, caloric abundance surely reduced instances of nutritional distress, which helped community members to maintain robust immune systems. The acts of colonial dispossession that elsewhere diminished the ability of Indigenous nations to feed themselves and produced deadly comorbidities were largely kept at bay here.[111]

Successful or not, British efforts to use biological warfare showed that ending hostilities and effectively achieving sovereignty in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley would require a bold and decisive application of power. As the fighting of 1763 dragged on through the summer, it

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[109] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 125-126 ("gatekeeper villages" on 126).

[110] Ibid., 47.

[111] Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," 735-736, 738; Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 28.

became clear that Jeffery Amherst's militaristic policies were both ineffective and costly, especially after the decisive Seneca victory at the Battle of Devil's Hole along the Niagara River in September. Unsurprisingly, the general was recalled to London that autumn. Unlike Amherst and a considerable number of his subordinates and an ever-growing number of Indian-hating settler-colonists, Sir William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, advocated a more subtle, though no less ruthless, approach to dealing with the borderland war: conciliation. If human and microbial soldiers were less than effective against this powerful enemy, the British might yet create a territorial empire in the Ohio Country with words, gifts, and the sharpened tip of a quill pen.

The Question of Sovereignty

Sir William Johnson, an experienced diplomat who relied on kinship ties with the Mohawks through his common-law wife Molly Brant and years of firsthand experience negotiating with Haudenosaunee leaders, sought stability between English colonists and Indigenous communities. Johnson was motivated by pragmatism, affection, and greed. He and other speculators stood to benefit handsomely from Indian cessions if only they could chart a narrow path between upholding Native land claims in the face of settler-colonial invasions (a prerequisite for ending the violence) and securing the legal transfer of territory west of the Appalachians.[112] Fortunately for Johnson, General Thomas Gage, Amherst's replacement, proved amenable to using diplomacy to quiet the people of the Lake Erie region and Ohio

[112] William J. Campbell, "Converging Interests: Johnson, Croghan, the Six Nations, and the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix," *New York History* 89, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 129-130; Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55-56; Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires*, 166-167.

Valley.[113] Like the French fifteen years earlier, they now worked to extend British sovereignty and, after that, Anglo-American property regimes as well.

One mechanism by which land might be made available to wealthy colonial landowners and daring opportunists involved the extension of the Covenant Chain. If warring tribes could be brought into a harmonious relationship with the British through Indigenous forms of diplomacy that extended Haudenosaunee territorial authority and consecrated British sovereignty, then these peoples might eventually be willing to agree to the cession western lands to the crown. But the British often greatly exaggerated the Covenant Chain. The alliance between the Iroquois Confederacy and the British had existed for nearly a century, augmenting an earlier relationship between the Five Nations and the Dutch. Although, to English eyes, nations like the Shawnees and Delawares appeared to exist in subordination to the confederacy all the way back to the Iroquois Wars, the reality was more complicated. While some Ohio Valley peoples had relied on Haudenosaunee mediators to treat with the British and were often loosely bound to the Covenant Chain through alliance or intermarriage, at no point in the eighteenth century could the Iroquois exert political control over Ohio inhabitants or their territory.[114] Nevertheless, as historian Colin Calloway explains, "By claiming sovereignty over peoples who inhabited lands where their war parties had ranged in the seventeenth century, Iroquois leaders created a mythology of conquest and domination that the British bought into and that allowed the Six Nations to negotiate away other peoples' lands in their dealings with the British colonies."[115] This productive fiction laid groundwork for a colonial (and postcolonial) order in which the law—in the form of ratified

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[113] White, *Middle Ground*, 289-291.

[114] Francis Jennings, "The Constitutional Evolution of the Covenant Chain," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115, no. 2 (April 1971): 88-96; Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 21-35.

[115] Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 49-50.

treaties and maps delineating imperial or national boundaries—would seek to reorganize Indigenous land rights that had long been negotiated in the context of complex overlapping territorial claims, local autonomy, and kinship.[116]

In June of 1764 George Croghan, acting as Johnson's agent in London, deployed the notion of Haudenosaunee imperialism as he outlined a case for fixing a new boundary line between Indigenous lands and English settlements. Croghan and Johnson hoped to secure additional land for English speculation, more tightly control trade with Indians, and guarantee the legal protection of clearly delineated Indian villages and hunting grounds, which would hopefully end frontier conflict. Croghan's letter to the Lords of Trade explained that "[A] natural Boundary should be made between them and us across the Frontiers of the British middle Colonies from the Heads of the River Delaware to the Mouth of the Ohio where it empties into the Mississippi; that the Lands west of such a line should be reserved for the Hunting Grounds of the Six Nations, and the Several tribes Dependent on them, and that a reasonable Consideration be given them as they are the original proprietaries of that Tract of Country for all the Lands East of such Boundary."[117]

Croghan's letter acknowledged Indigenous peoples as the "original proprietaries" of the lands he hoped to secure for speculation and personal gain. Yet, his description of the "Several tribes" of the Ohio Country as "Dependent" on the Six Nations dated back to the Iroquois Wars

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[116] On treaties, see Jones, *License for Empire*, 71-74. Although I do not touch on cartography here, the power of maps and map making to reorganize knowledge, create an appearance of order, and stake claims to territory has been long explored by scholars. My own thinking here has been influenced Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 84-93; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 44-52; Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), esp. 127-192; Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 24-79.

[117] George Croghan to the Lords of Trade, June 8, 1764, *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 7, ed. E. B. O'Callaghan (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1856), 603.

and the narratives that emerged out of earlier English designs on the Ohio Valley. The Great Peace of Montreal and subsequent on-the-ground negotiations between hunting parties or village chiefs established complex territorial claims and village and tribal relationships that confounded British understandings of sovereignty and land ownership.[118] Croghan reasoned that because Indians "have the highest notions of Liberty of any people on Earth," Britain could not infringe upon the lands of the villages and nations beyond the Appalachians without considerable expense.[119] If only Ohio and Illinois peoples could be persuaded to fully embrace the Covenant Chain, a new, more stable political order might emerge. This order would make use of the Covenant Chain but cast it in the more abstract and legible (to Europeans) terms of sovereignty, replacing the subtleties of Indigenous territoriality with the norms and assumptions of European statecraft.[120]

To this end, Johnson guided a month-long peace conference at Fort Niagara that summer.[121] During a month of successive councils, Johnson treated with emissaries representing the Michilimackinac and Detroit Anishinaabeg, the Seven Nations of Canada, the Detroit Wyandots, and Johnson's long-time allies, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The attendees renewed and extended the Covenant Chain and agreed to the terms of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The proclamation, which had been made public mere weeks before the end of the siege of

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[118] Patricia Albers and Jeanne Kay, "Sharing the Land: A Study in American Indian Territoriality," in *A Cultural Geography of North American Indians*, ed. Thomas E. Ross (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987).

[119] Croghan to the Lords of Trade, June 8, 1764, 603.

[120] Joanne Barker, "For Whom Sovereignty Matters," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 20-21; Taiaiake Alfred, "Sovereignty," in *Sovereignty Matters*, 34-36; Witgen, *Infinity of Nations*, 356-357.

[121] Conference with Indians, July 9-August 4, 1764, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 11, ed. Milton W. Hamilton (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1953), 262-324. See also A Conference with Foreign Nations, July 9-14, 1764, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander C. Flick (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1925), 466-481.

Detroit, recognized Indigenous land claims west of the Appalachians and made land speculation in the Ohio Country illegal since the crown now refused to grant titles. However, the proclamation also alluded to its own impermanence. The document stated, "We do further declare it to be Our Royal Will and Pleasure, *for the present* as aforesaid, to reserve under our Sovereignty, Protection, and Dominion, for the use of the said Indians, all the Lands and Territories not included within the Limits of Our said Three new Governments, or within the Limits of the Territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company, as also all the Lands and Territories lying to the Westward of the Sources of the Rivers which fall into the Sea from the West and North West as aforesaid [emphasis mine]."[122] "For the present" indeed. The proclamation left open the possibility that the boundary could be renegotiated in the future. Johnson and Croghan were already beginning to lay the groundwork for such a renegotiation. During the early days of the Niagara conference, Croghan sent unofficial word to Johnson that "the Lords of Trade has att Last Consented to Make a boundary between the Indians and us and has Made it an artickle of thire plan & Refer'd itt to your Honour to Setle…"[123] Moving the boundary would first require that all parties to the recent violence first lay down their arms and acknowledge British authority and the Royal Proclamation.

Unfortunately for Johnson, Croghan, and other land-hungry colonists, many of the main instigators of the anticolonial violence of 1763 and 1764—Pontiac's Odawas, Sandusky Wyandots, Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Iroquois—were conspicuously absent from the Niagara peace conference. These Black Swamp and upper Ohio Valley peoples mistrusted a

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[122] "By the King, A Proclamation," *The London Gazette*, October 8, 1763, issue 10356, p. 1, https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/10354/page/1 (accessed April 2, 2020).

[123] Croghan to Sir William Johnson, July 12, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson.*, vol. 4, 463. Ultimately, in the years to come, Croghan would find his land claims rejected and his schemes all for naught in the changing world of the American Revolution. See Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 88.

British empire that appeared to simultaneously desire peace and genocidal war.[124] Ohio peoples also likely sensed that the results of the treaty council—even one that seemingly affirmed Indigenous land rights west of the mountains—would ultimately require them to acknowledge British sovereignty over the region. Such recognition would threaten not only political independence, but also the village sites, rivers, and hunting lands that underwrote Native communities' political autonomy, social viability, and cultural continuity. The Ohio villagers stayed away from the conference at Niagara. For the moment, neither the Royal Proclamation of 1763 nor the Covenant Chain would be enough to secure the borderlands to British satisfaction.

In this context, Gage sent two expeditions into the Ohio Country in early autumn to achieve a cessation of hostilities.[125] Colonels John Bradstreet and Henry Bouquet were to converge on the Delawares and Shawnees living in the fertile Scioto and Muskingum valleys. Bradstreet would descend from the north via the Sandusky River portage and Bouquet would trek overland from Fort Pitt. First, though, Gage instructed Bradstreet to reinforce Major Henry Gladwin at Detroit. Gladwin suggested that Bradstreet should attack the villages on the lower Maumee and "cut up the Outawas['] Corn, which [would] distress them more than fire and sword."[126] Bradstreet wasted no time in abandoning that plan. Six days after leaving Fort Niagara, Lake Erie storms forced the colonel to move ashore near Presque Isle. While encamped, Shawnee, Delaware, Seneca, and Sandusky Wyandot emissaries approached Bradstreet to "beg for Mercy, & forgiveness and Peace." The colonel granted peace to the represented bands and

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[124] Nations at the General Meeting, July 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 481; White, *Middle Ground*, 291; McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, 233.

[125] Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 153-173; White, *Middle Ground*, 294-297; Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 50.

[126] Major Henry Gladwin to Colonel John Bradstreet, July 12, 1764, *Thomas Gage Papers*. Quoted in Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 155.

promised to send runners to halt Bouquet's expedition, which was already underway. In return, he demanded the speedy return of all Indian captives ("English, French, and Blacks") at a treaty ratification at Sandusky twenty-five days hence, the British reoccupation of forts, and Indian submission to English law.[127]

Upon learning of the tentative peace, Gage and Johnson were furious. In a letter to Johnson, Gage referred to it as an "unaccountable treaty."[128] Bradstreet had acted on his own, failed to punish the warring Indians, suggested that he had the authority to call off Bouquet's war party, and undermined Johnson's attempts to create a simplified and legible European-style, Haudenosaunee-centered diplomacy out of the complex politics of the villages, bands, and nations living in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley.[129] Gage harbored deep mistrust of the Shawnees and Delawares, fueled by rumors of continued aggression and planned attacks that circulated after the negotiations at Presque Isle.[130] Johnson distanced the British from Bradstreet's treaty and "endeavored to shew [the Haudenosaunee] that these Indians could not be

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[127] Letter from Colonel John Bradstreet to the Governor, *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 9 (Harrisburg: Theo Fenn & Co., 1852), 193-197; Bradstreet to Johnson, August 12, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 503-507. See also Chief Engineer John Montresor's journal entries for August 12-15, 1764 in G.D. Scull, ed., *The Montresor Journals* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1881), 180-181; and McConnell, *Country Between*, 197-200.

[128] General Thomas Gage to Johnson, September 4, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 524.

[129] Johnson to Gage, September 1, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 518-520; Gage to Johnson, September 2, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 521-522; Johnson to Gage, September 11, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 534-536; Gage to Johnson, September 16, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 538-540; Bouquet to Johnson, October 21, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 570-571; Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 157-158.

[130] Gage to Johnson, August 15, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 508-510; Gage to Johnson, September 4, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 524-525; Johnson to Gage, September 21, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 543-544; Gage to Johnson, October 1, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 550-551.

properly authorized" to make peace. He convinced some Six Nations leaders that the negotiations "did not carry appearance of Sincerity."[131]

Bradstreet, though, had relied on the best information at his disposal. A few weeks before his meeting with the emissaries at Presque Isle, he learned from Major Gladwin that Sandusky inhabitants had arrived at Detroit to return at least some captives and sue for peace.[132] Armed with this knowledge, Bradstreet likely felt more confident that the diplomats at Presque Isle were speaking truthfully. Indeed, many Haudenosaunee war leaders believed that Bradstreet's preliminary treaty was genuine and called for Bouquet's expedition to be halted. Gage felt differently and allowed Bouquet to proceed with the planned expedition up the Muskingum. In late October, Gage reported to Johnson that "An Onondaga & Oneyda [sic] have been with Col. Bouquet to desire he would not Advance; And that the Shawnese and Delawares would make Peace."[133]

Meanwhile, Bradstreet had sailed on toward Detroit in late August to sign a formal peace treaty with the Black Swamp and Detroit Anishinaabeg and Wyandots. On the way across Lake Erie, he sent two officers to negotiate with the Odawa chief Manitou at Sandusky Bay, and personally gave the terms of peace to Miami, Odawa, and Ojibwe representatives on the lower Maumee, before sending Captain Thomas Morris up the river to broker peace at the Miami Towns and in the Illinois Country with Wea, Mascouten, Kickapoo, and Illinois chiefs.[134] At

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[131] Johnson to Gage, September 21, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 544.

[132] On the Wyandots' peace overtures, see Scull, ed., *Montresor Journals*, 274; and Gage to Johnson, August 15, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 508-510.

[133] Gage to Johnson, October 26, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 11, 392.

[134] Testimony of Thomas King, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 552-555; Bradstreet to Johnson, August 28, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 11, 340-341; Scull, ed., *Montresor Journals*, 283-284.

Detroit, Bradstreet formally negotiated the peace with the local Ojibwes, Odawas, Potawatomis, Sandusky Wyandots, and Shawnees.[135] The Ojibwe chief Wasson, who had killed Captain Donald Campbell during the previous year's siege of Detroit in revenge for the murder of his nephew, began the conference with a speech begging the British for mercy and forgiveness. The Odawa leader Shamindawa then spoke on behalf of the absent Pontiac. Shamindawa claimed that Pontiac was ashamed of the war and sought forgiveness. Morris later gave a slightly different account of Pontiac's disposition. At his village on the lower Maumee, Pontiac told Morris, "I will lead the nations to war no more; let 'em be at peace, if they chuse it. I shall now become a wanderer in the woods; and if they [the British] come to seek me there, while I have an arrow left, I will shoot at them." However, Morris noted that in practice Pontiac sought a more clearly diplomatic path, going so far as to petition his Odawa kin and Miami allies to spare Morris' life.[136] The Haudenosaunees traveling with Bradstreet unceremoniously cut up a belt and an accompanying speech sent to the peace council by Pontiac, correctly understanding that the Odawa leader continued to seek the removal of the British and perhaps seeking to underscore and dramatize their role as arbiters in the conflict.[137] For the moment, Pontiac and others still actively sought French assistance in driving the British from the Ohio Country. Nevertheless, the Maumee Odawas signed the peace treaty and the late-arriving Sandusky Wyandots begged to be

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[135] On the preliminary negotiations with Maumee Odawas in August 1764, see "Journal of Captain Thomas Morris of His Majesty's XVII Regiment of Infantry," in *Early Western Travels*, vol. 1, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 301-328, hereafter cited as "Morris Journal." On the signing of the treaty at Detroit in September, see "Congress with the Western Nations, September 7-10, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 526-533; "A Conference between Bradstreet and the Wendots," *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 547-549; Scull, ed., *Montresor Journals*, 288-289.

[136] "Morris Journal," 307-317. See also Richard White's discussion of how Pontiac became a partial creation of British policy in White, *Middle Ground*, 298-305.

[137] Scull, ed., *Montressor Journals*, 287.

"admitted into the Submission made by the Ottawas, and Chippewas and the Peace granted them, as also to the other part of our Nation of Hurons of Detroit."[138]

After the Detroit conference, however, Chief Engineer John Montresor wrote in his journal that Bradstreet had received "advice from Sandusky that the Indians to a number of 800 Warriors had assembled there to oppose our troops from disembarking as proposed instead of ratifying the treaty." The colonel ordered his men to prepare at once to leave for Sandusky. On the way around Lake Erie's southwestern shore, the army rendezvoused with the two officers previously sent to Sandusky to receive the Shawnee captives from the Pickaway Plains villages. The Shawnees had never arrived.[139] Moreover, Montressor noted, "the officers were not well treated by some of that village [Sandusky]… that by what could be learnt [the Indians] proposed assembling about 1000 Warriors to surprise us when in council at Sandusky and to murder the whole."[140]

This report was commensurate with the Wyandots' militant attitudes a few months earlier. In early June, Teata, a Detroit Wyandot, and two Mohawk companions arrived at Sandusky to deliver a message from Johnson. According to the Mohawks, the Sandusky inhabitants ridiculed Teata behind his back, called the English fools, and threatened to continue the war alongside the Shawnees and Delawares.[141] This report seemed to justify Major Gladwin's overwhelmingly unfavorable impression of the Sandusky Wyandots, whom he called

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[138] "A Conference between Bradstreet and the Wendots, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 547.

[139] Bradstreet to Bouquet, October 17, 1764, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21651, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1943), 24.

[140] Scull, ed., *Montresor Journals*, 292.

[141] "The Gladwin Manuscripts," June 10, 1764, in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 27, 665-666

"a nest of thieves."[142] In fact, Gage had noted that spring that "Gladwin talk[s] worse of the Wiandots of Sandusky than of any other nation, And says they are better supplied, Having Ammunition, and plant Plenty of Corn, with which they Supply other Nations."[143] The Wyandots' dueling desire for conciliation and continued resistance perhaps indicated disagreements between civil and war chiefs. More than that, however, the apparent indecision revealed Sandusky peoples' uncertainty about the most efficacious path forward as they sought to maintain political autonomy. Ultimately, it was clear that many Black Swamp and upper Ohio Valley inhabitants continued to vigorously resist British colonialism. In this sense, Bradstreet's conference at Detroit was something of a diplomatic achievement in that it sidestepped the question of Ohio peoples' subjection to Haudenosaunee authority through the Covenant Chain and appeared to bring the belligerents, especially the Sandusky Wyandots, to a legitimate peace.[144]

Unlike Bradstreet, Bouquet obeyed orders and marched on the Muskingum villages. There, he secured the return of captives and, despite his insistence on "Satisfaction" for Indian misdeeds, he followed Bradstreet's lead and negotiated a shaky peace rather than unleash

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[142] Major Henry Gladwin to Amherst, November 1, 1763 in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society*, vol. 27, 676.

[143] Gage to Johnson, April 22, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 403.

[144] This analysis is based, of course, on surviving records. Tantalizingly, though, Alexander Flick, the editor of the fourth volume of the Sir William Johnson's papers, notes that Johnson's calendar references a letter labeled "Indian criticism of Colonel Bradstreet's conduct of his expedition." This letter along with many others was destroyed in a fire. Perhaps there were other reasons to critique the expedition beyond its subversion of Johnson, Gage, and Bouquet's desire to humble the Shawnees, Delawares, and Pontiac. See *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 516. We get a glimpse of Bradstreet's mismanagement of the expedition and Indian relations in Johnson's Remarks on the Conduct of Colonel Bradstreet, November 24, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 599-604.

violence.[145] Although both Bradstreet and Bouquet possessed strong forces—1,850 and 1,150 men, respectively—they each hesitated to engage in open warfare as they entered Indian territory. They likely worried, as Johnson did, that the troops were not "hardy, active, & Experienced in the Woods."[146] Native leaders, also reluctant to court violence in their homelands, managed to effectively wield diplomacy to prevent bloodshed. Despite the preliminary nature of peace talks, by the end of the year only the peoples of the Illinois Country remained openly hostile to the British. The expeditions into the Ohio Country made it clear that even as peace conferences were staged as the antithesis of violence, the extension of British sovereignty through acts of diplomacy—legal treaty by consensual agreement—would generally contain the stated or implied threat of physical violence.

Resentments no doubt festered among Indian communities as the British began to stabilize their presence in the upper Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region. Pontiac and other Native leaders remained suspicious of British intentions, while the common view among imperial officials was that Bradstreet had left too many loose ends for the tentative peace with Detroit and Black Swamp peoples to be trusted. Consequently, Johnson and his agents continued to work toward a lasting peace and a new boundary line that could facilitate land acquisition beyond the Appalachians.

Johnson, ever attentive to the management of Indian expectations, expressed deep concern that the Detroit treaty described the Native signatories as "Subjects and Children of the King of England." Reading such bold language in the treaty, the experienced Indian negotiator

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[145] Letter from Colonel Bouquet to the Governor, *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 9, 197; Bouquet to Johnson, October 21, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 570-571; Dowd, *War Under Heaven*, 162-169.

[146] Johnson to Gage, June 18, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 451.

no doubt saw his plans for extending the Covenant Chain crumbling before his very eyes. In late 1764 he wrote to the Lords of Trade, explaining that he was certain the Indians "never mean or intend, any thing like [expressions of subjection], and that they cannot be brought under our Laws, for some Centuries, neither have they any word which can convey the most distant idea of subjection, and should it be fully explained to them, and the nature of subordination, punishment ettc, defined, it might produce infinite harm, but could answer no purpose whatever."[147] Johnson worried that the language of sovereignty might undermine diplomatic efforts should the Indians inquire too closely about the wording of the treaty. He contrasted the precedent Bradstreet (perhaps inadvertently) was setting with the shrewder French method of colonial rule. The French, Johnson explained to the commission, had "endeavoured to render [the Indians] as Independent as possible, thro' policy." Indeed, the French "would never take on an affair of that nature." Rather, they had effectively governed their Great Lakes empire by avoiding such direct claims of sovereignty. The French instead managed Native peoples through "policy." The British, Johnson argued, should now do the same.

Johnson's analysis of colonial geopolitics may have appeared to offer straightforward advice about ill-conceived efforts to directly claim sovereignty over Indians. In fact, he betrayed the complexity of imperial governance by highlighting its necessary reliance on ambiguous concepts and unstable language. In referencing French colonialism, Johnson acknowledged that the French had been legitimate rulers of the Great Lakes Indians prior to the Seven Years' War. He explained that the French innovation had been to manage the Indians by "rendering" them "as Independent as possible." In other words, French imperial policies had simultaneously permitted *and* set limits on Indigenous independence. Thus, in Johnson's estimation, Native peoples'

[147] Johnson to Lords of Trade, October 30, 1764, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 7, ed. E.B. O'Calloghan (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1856), 674.

political autonomy could be judiciously circumscribed through more subtle techniques than the very public demands of subjection now on display in Bradstreet's treaty. The French, Johnson believed, had effectively achieved hegemony in this way for decades. They won allies and trade relationships through negotiations that continuously implied French authority to shape the forms that Indigenous political independence could take while avoiding overt displays of imperial rule. The British had so far failed to follow the French lead.

Now, however, with the possibility of a colonial boundary pushed west and new lands made available for Anglo-American speculation and settlement, it was critical to quell hostilities and create an appropriately ambiguous relationship between powerful stateless Indians and the anemically expanding British empire. Johnson believed that the Covenant Chain and its insinuation of Haudenosaunee primacy offered the clearest option for creating this necessarily vague political relationship because it extended British power through a proxy. In short, British officials would do well to conceal their attempts to claim sovereignty under the guise of Indigenous geopolitics.

Imperial Sovereignty and its Discontents

In order to secure western lands, Sir William Johnson and his agents needed to first legitimize the border set by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Having theoretically stopped the movement of backcountry settlers across the Appalachian Mountains with the Royal Proclamation, British officials sought to enact similar control over the Native bands who had sparked the conflict. First, during Bradstreet's negotiations at Detroit in 1764, the Sandusky Wyandots had been so worried about being either locked out of trade with the British or crushed by Bradstreet's forces, that the young chiefs present at the treaty signing, Youngwate and

Datoraha, readily agreed to move their bands back to Detroit.[148] Some Wyandots still remained along the Sandusky, although most appear to have moved to new village sites at the river's headwaters some 50 miles further from Detroit and that much closer to the Delaware and Shawnee villages.

Then there was the matter of Pontiac. In the summer of 1765, nervous British negotiators set out to secure a lasting peace with the Odawa leader to prevent future violence and exert more direct influence over the country. Pontiac, who had been attempting to amass influence among the Illinois peoples, emerged as a voice of diplomacy and came to Detroit to speak on behalf of his village.[149] George Croghan and Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Campbell met with the delegation early in a flurry of peace councils lasting from late August to late September.[150] Although they drafted no treaties, the councils achieved the desired effect of eliciting promises of friendship from the Black Swamp peoples and forging a tentative alliance that built upon the previous year's diplomacy at Niagara and Detroit. After long months of negotiation carried out by Croghan, Campbell, Morris, and other agents across the region, British officials could publicly declare victory over the Native "rebellion," especially since they had secured the return of captives and the reoccupation of lost forts.[151] In a truer sense, both the war and its denouement dramatically exposed the limits of British sovereignty and forced imperial officials to acknowledge as much when they began enforcing the Royal Proclamation.[152]

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[148] A Conference between Bradstreet and the Wendots, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 548.

[149] White, *Middle Ground*, 297-304.

[150] "Croghan Journal," August 23-September 27, 152-166.

[151] "Croghan Journal," September 25, 1765, 165; McConnell, *Country Between*, 165; White, *Middle Ground*, 305.

[152] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 55; White, *Middle Ground*, 305-306.

The British hoped to resettle Pontiac and his followers at Detroit, just as Bradstreet had managed with the Sandusky Wyandots the previous year. In a telling exchange during Pontiac's August 27 council with Croghan and Campbell, the British speaker, presumably Croghan, lamented that he was "sorry to see our Children dispersed thro' the Woods, I therefore desire you will return to your Antient Settlements & take care of your Council Fire which I have now dressed up, & promote the good work of Peace."[153] The relocation of the Odawas to the lower Maumee and many of the Wyandots farther up the Sandusky River obviously worried the Indian agents, who surely sensed that their ability to manage Indians, settlers, and traders could not extend very far beyond their fortified outposts.

The next day, Pontiac, citing the corrosive influence of living so close to British soldiers and traders, rejected the request to return to Detroit. In a speech transcribed by Croghan, the Odawa leader explained his position:

> Fathers we are obliged to you for lighting up our old Council Fire for us, & desiring us to return to it, but we are now settled at the Miamis [Maumee] River, not far from hence, whenever you want us you will find us there ready to wait on you, the reason I choose to stay where we are now settled, is that we love liquor, and did we live here as formerly, our People would be always drunk, which might occasion some quarrels between the Soldiers & them, this Father is all the reason I have for not returning to our old Settlements, & that we live so nigh this place, that when we want to drink, we can easily come for it.[154]

There is little reason to question Pontiac's logic. The war that bears his name was sparked, in part, by the words of the Delaware prophet, Neolin, who hoped to eradicate alcohol consumption and the misery it caused.[155] At Detroit, Pontiac had surely witnessed many instances of violence

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[153] "Croghan Journal," August 27, 1765, 157.

[154] "Croghan Journal," August 28, 1765, 157-158.

[155] On Neolin's advice from the Master of Life, see Pontiac's speech at Detroit, April 27, 1763 in Mary Agnes Burton, ed., *Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy 1763* (Detroit: Clarence Monroe Burton, 1912), 20-32, esp. 28.

and bad dealings as unscrupulous French traders plied Wyandots and Odawas with alcohol before fleecing them of their hard-earned peltries and leaving them to drink, argue, and fight.[156] However, in this context, we should also interpret Pontiac's response to Croghan and Campbell as a resolute assertion of political independence from the British at Detroit. This independence would be underwritten by geographic distance from the major British outpost in the Great Lakes as well as by the wealth extracted from Black Swamp hunting grounds. And it would be guaranteed by continued British imperial weakness in the Ohio Country.

The British had reason to be concerned about their ability to manage Indian movements and preserve the Appalachian boundary line. As the movement of Pontiac's Odawa kin and allies reveals, Indigenous expansion south of Lake Erie continued throughout the struggle (not least of all because the fighting itself caused temporary dislocations). The Sandusky Wyandots abandoned Junundat in 1763. Likewise, a nearby village at the lower rapids of the Sandusky River (labeled Nungantanty in one French map) also experienced temporary population loss. Rather than risk living near the major imperial highway of Lake Erie, many Wyandots, as previously noted, moved to the headwaters of the Sandusky and established a strategic village near the Scioto portage.[157] Although the move took them away from the wetland flora of the Black Swamp and the spawning fish found below the rapids, residents of the upper Sandusky benefitted from plentiful game and forage in the nearby Sandusky Plains. This 190,000-acre tallgrass prairie was one of the easternmost pockets of a prairie peninsula that extended in small patches from present-day western Indiana to west-central Ohio. The Moravian missionary David

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[156] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 43-44. Indian captive James Smith describes just this scene in Detroit during the late spring of 1757 as drunken Wyandots and Odawas traded more and more furs for brandy until they were left with nothing. It is possible, likely perhaps, that Pontiac was present during the scene detailed by Smith.

[157] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 50 (Map 11).

Zeisberger described the region in 1781 as "a perfect plain, where there is nothing but grass, which is so high and long that on horseback a man can hardly see over it, only here and there a little clump of bushes."[158] Like other natural ecotones, the plains attracted migrating fowl, deer, and bison, providing reliable sources of food for much of the year.[159]

The Black Swamp forest-prairie complex continued to supply Miamis, Wyandots, Odawas, and their kin with roots, tubers, nuts, berries, and game animals both large and small. Autumn and winter hunting parties ranged widely across the countryside, typically sharing access to the same lands in mixed hunting bands consisting of allied Ojibwes, Caughnawaga Mohawks, Odawas, and Wyandots.[160] At Sandusky Bay, the Odawa leader Manitou and his people had established a village on Marblehead peninsula soon after the Wyandots permanently left Junundat.[161]

Along the lower Maumee, Pontiac's village and two nearby Odawa towns thrived.[162] During his trip up the Maumee in late summer 1764, Thomas Morris had enjoyed large meals of corn, deer, turkey, geese, duck, fish, and even a bobcat.[163] John Montresor, encamped at the mouth of the Maumee with Bradstreet's forces as Morris headed upriver, also noted the strategic

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[158] Eugene F. Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Zeisberger, A Moravian Missionary among the Indians of Ohio*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 185), 19. See also Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 48.

[159] Edgar Nelson Transeau, "The Prairie Peninsula," *Ecology* 16, no. 3 (July 1935): 423-437; Gordon G. Whitney and Joseph R. Steiger, "Site-Factor Determinants of the Presettlement Prairie-Forest Border Areas of North-Central Ohio," *Botanical Gazette* 146, no. 3 (Sept. 1985): 421-430.

[160] For firsthand accounts of mixed hunting camps, see Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 17, 30-32, 48.

[161] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 62.

[162] Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 150-151.

[163] "Morris Journal," 311-312.

advantage of the "impassable swamp" on the river's eastern bank.[164] A few weeks later, as the Bradstreet expedition returned to the area, Montresor once again commented on the country: "The lands extremely fine interspersed here and there with intervals of meadow producing chiefly *Folle avoine* a kind of Oats which the Indians make bread of."[165] British visitors never failed to marvel at the bounty of the Black Swamp and the abundance Native bands could coax from this landscape. The following August, on his way to Detroit from a diplomatic mission to Illinois, George Croghan visited the lower Maumee communities. He wrote that the Odawas had settled the region "on account of the richness of the country." From the Auglaize River to the rapids, Croghan explained, they "claim this country, and hunt here, where game is very plenty."[166]

The presence of Odawas at both edges of the wetland did not prevent Sandusky Wyandots from utilizing hunting lands along that river or across the Black Swamp to the lower Maumee.[167] Such territorial arrangements were likely negotiated (often ad-hoc) and mixed hunting parties essentially created joint claims to the game and forage of the wetland. At the swamp's western edge, the large communities near the Maumee-Wabash portage shared access to hunting grounds, though Miami dominance of the fur trade indicates that, at least as far as peltries were concerned, most hunters, no matter their tribal affiliation, ultimately traded with the Miami or Métis women and men who operated the trade.[168]

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[164] Scull, ed., *Montresor Journals*, 283.

[165] Ibid., 293.

[166] "Croghan Journal," August 6, 1765, 151; White, *Middle Ground*, 304-305.

[167] Bond, ed., "Captivity of Charles Stuart," 73.

[168] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 95.

In the years immediately before and after Pontiac's War, Senecas, Mohawks, and Delawares began to settle among Sandusky Wyandots, while Ojibwes, Potawatomis, and Shawnees found homes with or near the Odawas on the lower Maumee or near the Miami villages at the headwaters.[169] By 1768, at least 3,500 people lived permanently or semi-permanently at the edges of the Black Swamp and subsisted on the wetland's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and forage, as well as crops grown in the rich riparian soils.[170] Although they had failed to drive the British from their country, Ohio peoples successfully established a fragile relationship with British imperial agents and effectively asserted their territorial claims.[171] The independence fostered by Indians' strong political alliances and ample supplies of food and furs worried the British. The villages scattered across this territory would never be easily controlled, even if most Native leaders had signed treaties. Nevertheless, the resettlement of the fertile region continued through the 1760s and into the era of the American Revolution.

British imperial and settler designs on the Ohio Country also accelerated as diplomatic relations stabilized. While the Miamis and Odawas of the Maumee Valley and the Sandusky Wyandots were protected by the Black Swamp and their distance from the Appalachian frontier,

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[169] "Croghan Journal," August 27, 1765, 156, 168.

[170] Helen Hornbeck Tanner estimates that in 1768 some 1,000 Odawas lived in Northwest Ohio; 1,000 Wyandots resided in upper and lower Sandusky Valley settlements; and about 4,000 Miamis, Weas, and Piankeshaws had settled villages in the Wabash Valley. At most, probably 1,000-1,400 of these Wabash residents lived in the Miami Towns at the headwaters of the Maumee (Miamitown or Kekionga) in the mid-1760s. Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin's population figures are roughly the same. In 1764-1765, she estimates that 280-320 people resided in Junundat, 400 at Lower Sandusky (before its partial abandonment), 360-400 at Upper Sandusky, 920 at Miamitown, and an unknown number residing in four lower Maumee villages. For population estimates, see Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 66; and Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio*, 149-151. See also Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 58-59 (Map 13) for the location of settlements in 1768. On Miamitown's rapid growth, see Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 146; and Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 88.

[171] For an assessment of Algonquian assertions of territorial independence and the new diplomatic relations created during and after the conflict, see Jon William Parmenter, "Pontiac's War: Forging New Links in the Anglo-Iroquois Covenant Chain, 1758-1766," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1997): 617-654.

the Shawnees, Delawares, and Iroquois diaspora of the Ohio Valley found themselves in the path of illegal squatters and land speculators. For the moment, these speculators were mostly neutered by the Royal Proclamation, which promised that title would not be granted to land claims beyond the line. However, Sir William Johnson's larger imperial plans sought to clear the way for speculators to gain title to lands several hundred miles west of the current boundary.

Johnson and George Croghan had hoped to secure the movement of the proclamation line west into the Ohio River Valley even before the end of Pontiac's War. Continued murders in the Appalachian borderlands and the work of maintaining the fragile peace kept officials busy and tensions high.[172] Action on the boundary was further delayed as the British colonies approached crisis following the 1765 Stamp Act and the subsequent civil unrest. Weighing the cost of the colonies, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, the Earl of Shelburne, abandoned ultimately imperial administration of Indian affairs in 1767. The following spring, Great Britain ceased regulating relations between the colonies and Native peoples. The colonies would now chart their own paths forward with Indian nations. Shelburne had, however, already granted Johnson permission to pursue a new boundary line west of the Appalachians. Johnson's instructions were to extend the line no farther than the Kanawha River (in present West Virginia). Yet, he had already laid the groundwork to claim all of what would become Kentucky.[173]

The opening maneuvers to claim western land were not lost on Shawnees and other residents of the upper Ohio. At a conference at Fort Pitt in the spring of 1768, Haudenosaunee, Shawnee, and Delaware leaders spoke against British and settler encroachments and violence in

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[172] White, *Middle Ground*, 343-351.

[173] Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 63; White, *Middle Ground*, 352.

the region. The Shawnee chief Nymwha, cutting to the heart of the matter, rejected Britain's right to occupy forts in the Ohio Country or claim territorial and legal control over the region. He explained to Croghan and emissaries from Pennsylvania that "[All Nations of Indians] are also uneasy to see that you think yourselves Masters of this Country, because you have taken it from the French, who you know had no right to it, as it is the property of us Indians."[174] Nymwha cautioned the British not to attempt to lay claim to Indian Country, but his words fell on deaf ears. The Ohio Valley south of the river was now in play as Johnson prepared for the largest treaty conference British North America would see.

That October, at Fort Stanwix between the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, Johnson treated exclusively with Haudenosaunee leaders over the fate of western lands south of the Ohio. In a letter to William Franklin, Johnson explained that he invited the Shawnees and Delawares to the conference "not as Owners of the Land but as Nigh Neighbours to the Settlements, to whom they may easily be troublesome."[175] Despite the fact that the negotiations targeted Shawnee and Delaware hunting lands, Johnson did not permit the two nations to formally participate in the conference. At last, through the alchemy of law, he could transform the relationship between the Six Nations and their "dependents" into one intelligible to European notions of sovereignty. As a result, the British colonies were able to effect a massive land grab. For their part, the Haudenosaunees hoped to prevent further encroachments by white settlers onto their lands as

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[174] At a Conference held with the Indians at Fort Pitt, on Tuesday the third of May, 1768, *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, vol. 9 (Harrisburg: Theo. Fenn & Co., 1852), 528.

[175] Johnson to William Franklin, July 28, 1768, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 12, ed. Milton W. Hamilton (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1957), 564.

well as those of the Ohio peoples. At the same time, they sought to take advantage of the situation by selling off lands they could not plausibly claim to own in any true sense.[176]

The Treaty of Fort Stanwix very nearly extended the boundary between Anglo and Indian lands to the Tennessee River, though the lands beyond the Kanawha remained unauthorized by Great Britain and disputed on the ground.[177] The proclamation line south of the Ohio now jutted grotesquely westward and encompassed important hunting grounds on which Ohio Shawnees and Delawares relied.[178] The aftermath of the treaty saw the transformation of this region into a grim charnel house. British assertions of sovereignty (now backed by treaty) drew the attention of white colonists who flocked to these newly acquired lands with the hopes of acquiring legal title and making money or achieving a competency. They ratcheted up violence as they came. The Shawnees, Delawares, and Ohio Iroquois weathered the storm by taking revenge for killings, planning for war, and appealing to Johnson and other leaders to rein in murderous settlers. By and large, the British and colonial governments were not up to the task of curtailing borderlands violence. The material-ideological support of the imperial and colonial governments—often in the form of firearms supplied to militias and land surveyors descending on the countryside—readily combined with the land hunger of speculators and settler colonists to fan the flames of violence in the Ohio Country. Ultimately, the capturing of frontier zones by the British (and,

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[176] White, *Middle Ground*, 352; Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 77-80. It is also important to note that the Haudenosaunees regarded the Shawnees as "younger brothers" and the Delawares as "nephews"—relationships that could not comport with European notions of conquest and subordination. See Jane T. Merritt, "Metaphor, Meaning, and Misunderstanding: Language and Power on the Pennsylvania Frontier," in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[177] Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft*, 81.

[178] Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

later, the United States) depended on both the logistical support of governmental institutions and the energy and zeal of settler colonists.[179]

By 1770, many Ohio Valley inhabitants were fed up. In February, the Shawnee subchief Red Hawk delivered a speech to Indian agent Alexander McKee at Fort Pitt, complaining about white settlers "appearing more like Warriors than friends." Red Hawk explained that his people's present misery stemmed from the fraudulent land sale of the Fort Stanwix Treaty: "the Six Nations have no more right to sell the Country than we have… [we] have listened to them while we found their advice good, but their power extends no further with us; they always deny having agreed to your taking possession of this Country and have sent us Wampum to join them in striking your people for it to convince us of their disapprobation."[180] While most Shawnees would remain in the Muskingum or Scioto valleys to face Kentucky settlers to their south or seek accommodation, many eventually moved north and west to the Little Miami River, the Mad

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[179] Rob Harper, "State Intervention and Extreme Violence in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley," *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 2 (June 2008): 233-248; and Harper, *Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Harper's sharp analysis points to governments' roles in promoting rather than curbing violence in the upper Ohio Valley. This argument contrasts with works like Patrick Griffin's *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), which sees colonial governments attempting (sometimes unsuccessfully) to bring order to a Hobbesian state of nature in which Indians and settlers killed each other with impunity. While Harper recovers important relationships between Indigenous peoples and white settlers, his analysis risks reifying "the state" as a singular, unproblematically constituted entity. We might rather understand "the state" as the *effect* of logistical practices (e.g., surveying or the creation of laws) that are internal to the very operation of sociopolitical power. In this case, "the state" took the form of laws, courts, land surveys, armies, and governmental institutions, which appeared to be entirely separate from the speculators, settlers, livestock, fences, guns, and beliefs that simultaneously extended and legitimated both colonial governance and borderlands violence. Such a separation only appeared to exist as governments attempted to assert their universality and rationality. The appearance of the state-as-order and the frontier-as-disorder (or vice-versa in Harper's analysis) obscures the creation of this internal division that makes "the state" appear as if it is a discrete entity whose purpose is to deploy the rule of law to create order. This is, in the words of Timothy Mitchell, "the distinctive technique of the modern political order." On this point, see Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (March 1991): 77-96 (quote on 78). See also Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); and Patrick Joyce and Chandra Mukerji, "The State of Things: State History and Theory Reconfigured," *Theory and Society* 46, no. 1 (May 2017): 1-19.

[180] Speech of Red Hawk, enclosed with letter from Alexander McKee to Croghan, February 20, 1770, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 7, ed. Alexander C. Flick (Albany: State University of New York, 1931), 407-408.

River, and Loramie Creek as conflict intensified.[181] Even though white colonists did not yet threaten daily life in and around the Black Swamp in the early 1770s, villagers living far north of the wave of land speculation and settlement recognized the danger posed by migrating Virginians and Pennsylvanians as violence gripped the Ohio Valley.

Yet, to the north and west, the Wyandots, Odawas, and Miamis remained relatively secure. Their hunting grounds around the Black Swamp and in the forests and dry prairies to the east and south were generally unthreatened. The Odawas and Wyandots, despite their small numbers, capably projected power and appeared ready to mount a powerful defense of their homelands. Despite failing to drive the British out of the region, Pontiac's War had left British leaders with a clear sense of their weakness in the face of Indigenous adversaries. George Croghan and Sir William Johnson recognized as much. In his letter to the Board of Trade in the spring of 1764, Croghan explained that the western Indians possessed "great advantages over us; they can with great ease enter our Colonies, and cut off our frontier settlements, and thereby lay waste to a large Tract of Country… they have killed and captivated not less than two thousand of his Majesty's subjects, and drove some thousands to Beggary and the greatest distress, besides burning to the ground nine Forts or Block-houses in their Country and killing a number of His Majesty's Troops and Traders."[182] Months later, during Bradstreet's expedition to the Lake Erie villages and Detroit, Johnson explained to Cadwallader Colden that "Bradstreet is well convinced of the absurdity of attempting to go to extremes with [the Western Indians], Justly observing that we cant always keep an Army on the Frontiers, and that tho he might be able at

[181] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 79-81, esp. Map 16 (80).

[182] Croghan to the Lords of Trade, June 8, 1764, *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 7, 603.

present to establish a Post, it remains entirely at the Indians discretion whether we shall keep it or not."[183] And from Detroit, Major Gladwin had grumbled to General Gage in the tense spring of 1764 that the Wyandots were "better supplied [than any of their neighbors], Having Ammunition, and plant Plenty of Corn, with which they Supply other Nations."[184] While Anglo-American settlers might be shifting the balance of power in the upper Ohio Valley, the peoples of the Black Swamp enjoyed safety, abundance, and territorial power.

As the fates of the upper Ohio Valley and the Erie basin briefly diverged, Black Swamp peoples caught a glimpse of what might lay in store for them should colonial settlements cross over into the lands north of the Ohio. British sovereignty was mostly a chimera, but colonial land grabs, now apparently the *raison d'être* of treaty negotiations, were real. As the fundament of sovereign power, the control of land and livelihoods would be at stake in the years to come as settler invasions threatened the entire Ohio Country. But Indigenous communities, particularly around the Black Swamp, exercised control over a vast, fecund domesticated landscape. Their power would not be easily diminished.

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[183] Johnson to Cadwallader Colden, August 23, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 513.

[184] Gage to Johnson, April 22, 1764, *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 4, 403.

CHAPTER IV:
THE NATURE OF POWER

Land, Subsistence, and the Question of Agency

Even in landscapes of nutritional abundance, everyone eventually experienced hunger. Tecaughretanego was no different. By sixty years of age, the accomplished Caughnawaga Mohawk hunter well understood that seasons of want would pass and could be endured. In February 1758, he remained patient despite a worrisome situation. His brother, Scoonwa or James Smith, a twenty-one-year-old Pennsylvanian who had been captured and adopted three years earlier, was having no luck hunting. An icy crust glazed the upper Olentangy River Valley (a tributary of the Scioto River), making it difficult for the younger man to surprise bears, deer, and smaller game as he trudged noisily through the snow. Tecaughretanego, suffering from what was probably a debilitating flare-up of arthritis, remained in the snow-covered lodging with his young son Nungany while Scoonwa tried in vain to track deer day after day. After one unsuccessful excursion, Tecaughretanego explained to the Pennsylvanian that he need not worry:

> As you have lived with the white people, you have not had the same advantage of knowing that the great being above feeds his people, and gives them their meat in due season, as we Indians have, who are frequently out of provisions, and yet are wonderfully supplied, and that so frequently that it is evidently the hand of the great Owaneeyo that doth this: whereas the white people have commonly large stocks of tame cattle, that they can kill when they please, and also their barns and cribs filled with grain, and therefore have not the same opportunity of seeing and knowing that they are supported by the ruler of Heaven and Earth…. I have been frequently under the like circumstance that we now are, and that sometime or other in almost every year of my life; yet I have hitherto been supported, and my wants supplied in time of need… Owaneeyo some times suffers us to be in want, in order to teach us our dependence on him, and to let us know that we are to love and serve him.[1]

[1] James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Colonel James Smith, during his Captivity with the Indians, in the years 1755, '56, '57, '58, and '59* (Lexington, KY: John Bradford, 1799), 51.

The older man delivered reassurance to Scoonwa in a syncretic appeal to a singular, all-powerful deity. But despite the resonant message, the famished Scoonwa resolved to abandon his adoptive family the next morning and walk 350 miles back to his home in eastern Pennsylvania. Ten miles from the winter camp, however, he spotted hoofprints in the snow. After tracking and killing a large bison—his first hunting success in many days—Scoonwa guiltily made his way back to the camp, feeling ashamed at the "base inhumanity" he displayed when he very nearly left the old man and boy in such desperate circumstances. He could not help but marvel at Tecaughretanego's wisdom. It was indeed providential that at the hour of despair, the young hunter's needs had been met.[2]

Whether embellished or not, this account from James Smith's captivity narrative highlights the flexible adaptations to late winter scarcity that made the semisedentary peoples of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley such successful settlers. The Black Swamp and surrounding prairie and wetland regions may have contained the best agricultural, fishing, and hunting grounds in the Ohio Country, but human subsistence was always limited by variations in precipitation and seasonal weather, and by the length of the growing season itself. Life in what some historians have labeled the "biological old regime" or "ecological old regime" depended almost exclusively on the sunlight captured annually during warmer months by photosynthetic plants and on the soil nutrients that could be replaced by crop rotation, fallowing, or swidden agriculture.[3] A certain amount of precarity was, therefore, an inescapable part of life. Yet, the

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[2] Ibid., 52.

[3] The "biological old regime," a concept developed by Fernand Braudel, refers to the energy regime of the vast majority of human history. According to Robert Marks, this long period was defined by a subsistence world in which "virtually all human activity drew upon *renewable* sources of energy supplied on an annual basis by the sun" rather than the ancient stores of solar energy found in fossil fuels or the fission reactions of nuclear energy production. Gregory Cushman has relabeled the concept the "ecological old regime" to highlight the interplay of

fact of scarcity affected different peoples in different ways. For Indigenous Americans, shortages of food, fuel, or fiber were features of life for which communities prepared and to which they adapted their social forms, practices, and expectations.[4]

Soldiers and other agents of British empire, by contrast, relieved scarcity in the backcountry by requisitioning stored foodstuffs or trade goods originally grown or manufactured in the North American colonies or elsewhere in the empire. Only occasionally could they rely on livestock and crops raised around their forts. Rather than flexibly adapting to the whims of their local environments, British troops relied heavily on imperial infrastructures to make up for supply shortages. The extension of empire depended directly on wheat, cattle, and other domesticated flora and fauna grown by colonial farmers, most of whom lived east of the Appalachians and far from the politically contested Ohio Country. In short, effective colonialism—and, indeed, the success of the fiscal-military British state itself—required the empire to function as a vast space of material circulation in order to facilitate extractivism and/or conquest at the so-called peripheries. These differences between American Indian and British responses to scarcity amounted to divergent understandings and enactments of territory and property in the contested borderland regions of the lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley. Illuminating these material-conceptual differences can help us to better appreciate Ohio peoples'

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ecological factors limiting the ability of human populations to accelerate agricultural production through the manipulation of the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles. See, respectively, Robert Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, Fourth Ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 40-41; and Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38-40.

[4] My understanding of Indigenous subsistence and the benefits of semi-sedentism and nomadism is indebted to William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 34-53; and James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

relative strength leading up to the era of the American Revolution as well as the eventual erosion of Indigenous power.

Building from the previous chapter, I set out here to make a case for the historical agency and political power of Indigenous communities living at the edges of the Black Swamp. Yet, by asserting that any individual or collective simply exercised "agency," "power," or something approaching "autonomy," I risk black-boxing or outright obscuring the varied relationships between humans, animals, plants, minerals, water, soil, and microbes that actually produce what we refer to as "agency" or, in its collective, networked form, "power." As many environmental historians, anthropologists, cognitive scientists, evolutionary biologists, and others have argued, human beings are not actually autonomous, self-creating, self-sustaining beings capable of simply producing power or acting in isolation. Power and agency are relational; autonomy is a fiction. What we might regard as human agency—simply and broadly understood as the ability to make difference in the world—results from the webs of biological and socioecological connections and interactions that make up our very existence.[5] Even human intentionality, which in some definitions is roughly synonymous with agency, emerges from our practical, material

[5] This gloss on a disciplines-spanning set of arguments seeks to summarize works by historians, political theorists, philosophers, anthropologists, and scholars of science, technology, and society (STS). But see esp. Timothy J. LeCain, *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002), 19-53; Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency," *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (2005): 67-69; Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (Autumn 2003): 113-124; Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 89-92; John Law and Annemarie Mol, "The Actor Enacted: Cumbrian Sheep in 2001," in *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach*, ed. Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, LLC, 2010), 57-78; Tim Ingold, "When ANT Meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Arthropods," in *Material Agency*, 209-216; Ingold, "Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials," Realities Working Paper #15, July 2010, http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/1306/1/0510_creative_entanglements. pdf (accessed May 12, 2020); Kyle Powys Whyte, "Indigeneity," in *Keywords in Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 143-145; Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought & Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20-34.

engagement with the world. The power/agency that Indigenous Americans (or any human beings) enacted through warfare, diplomacy, and other widely recognizable political actions depended on the daily and yearly rhythms of food gathering, plant and animal husbandry, shelter building, biological reproduction, religious observation, oral intergenerational knowledge transmission, and other such world-making activities.[6] Scholars risk reifying Western notions of liberal individualism and political subjectivity if we take "agency" as a given, as something that inheres in a somehow autopoietic human individual who exists independently of the material relationality immanent in everyday life.[7] Such formulations of human agency have long stood in contrast to pantheistic cosmologies and ecologically attuned social theories.[8]

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[6] On the material nature of political action, see John Law and Annemarie Mol, "Globalisation in Practice: On the Politics of Boiling Pigswill," *Geoforum* 39, no. 1 (January 2008): 133-143; and Edmund Russell, et al., "The Nature of Power: Synthesizing the History of Technology and Environmental History," *Technology and Culture* 52, no. 2 (April 2011): 246-259.

[7] To take one example from a celebrated work of Native American and environmental history, Elliott West begins *The Contested Plains* by discussing how imagination and cognition constitute the defining features of human agency. West writes, "A naked man looks at a bear and thinks that he would be warmer if he could grow such hair. Then he wonders what would happen if he simply took the bear's hair for himself. The result—clothing—makes the man more comfortable, increases his ability to move around, lengthens his lifespan, and therefore expands his influence on things around him. The crucial event was not his killing of the bear, or the fashioning of a garment, but the *first* picturing of himself, bear-robed, inside his own head as he stood shivering and wondering" (emphasis mine). Here West locates the catalyst for action inside the "head" of the naked human. The archetypal man "thinks," "wonders," and "pictures" a future within his brain and then apparently enacts that mental vision. West is not wrong, but he has jumped into the story too late. He fails to account for the true origin of agency and imagination itself. The naked man could only imagine the warmth of the bearskin if he had already experienced the material qualities of heat-trapping animal hair (its texture, weight, density, etc.) at some point in his past. The agential act occurred not when the man pictured a new fur-clad future for himself in his mind's eye, but rather when he first *experienced* and became aware of the heat-trapping qualities of animal fur. In short, the imaginative and perceptual capacity that supposedly defines human agency is dependent upon a meshwork of embodied *relationships* from which we draw our experiences and knowledge. Human agency is, therefore, never simply a product of the human mind, nor is it ever solely human. See West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), XX. For more effective formulations of the embodied nature of knowledge production and transmission, see Andy Clark, "Where Brain, Body and World Collide," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 127, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 257-280; Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 157-171; Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 58-98.

[8] On Indigenous cosmologies and pantheism, see Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3 (Sept. 1998): 469-488; Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 92-99; Tim Ingold, "Rethinking the Animate, Re-Animating Thought," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 71, no. 1 (2006): 9-20; and Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Pantheologies: Gods, Worlds, Monsters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). The ecologically attuned social theories (and methods) I have in mind here

Several recent works of history highlight the materiality of power and its relational nature. Among the most explicit are Pekka Hämäläinen's study of Comancheria and Robert Morrissey's analysis of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia. Both scholars map the complex subsistence, trade, and energy relationships that these polities assembled and redirected to produce political power. Yet, for both societies, key sources of collective agency—equine husbandry, the Southern Plains grasslands, and regional circuits of trading and raiding for the Comanches and bison hunting, prairie-forest ecotone food production, and trade for the Illinois—simultaneously produced the material strengths and vulnerabilities that defined the entire sociopolitical system.[9]

Likewise, anthropologists have increasingly foregrounded the material nature of Indigenous or "traditional" knowledge-making practices. From the important ancestral stories associated with particular Native places to the belief systems and social practices that refuse to distinguish between physics and metaphysics, it is clear that many Indigenous peoples (both past and present) have not regarded knowledge as a decontextualized, infinitely mobile product of a disembodied human mind. Nor is knowledge transmitted through a purely ideational thing called "culture." Rather, knowledge—"traditional" or otherwise—is geographically situated and constituted through the embodied experiences of living in and grappling with the world.[10]

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include the actor-network theory of STS scholars, the vital materialism of philosophers and political theorists, and the neo-materialism practiced by historians like Timothy LeCain. See, respectively, Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and LeCain, *Matter of History*.

[9] Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 2010): 173-208; Robert Michael Morrissey, "The Power of the Ecotone: Bison, Slavery, and the Rise and Fall of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia," *Journal of American History* 102, no. 3 (December 2015): 667-692.

[10] The anthropological literature highlighting Indigenous knowledge production is extensive. Influential works include Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*; Tim Ingold, *Being*

Understood in this way, knowledge is produced through actions that harness material power; and power emerges from and congeals around the embodied acquisition of knowledge. Agency—intentionally or unintentionally enacting change or making difference—is, therefore, the uncertain outcome of material (inter)actions that recruit, direct, and distribute power-knowledge.[11] Any effective analysis of "human agency" must, therefore, take seriously the role of the material worlds in which we living beings are enmeshed.

Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description (New York: Routledge, 2011); Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2015); and Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). So-called Western knowledge is no different from traditional knowledge insofar as its situatedness, contingency, and particularity are concerned. The key difference is that Western science claims a kind of universality that it is able to produce only uncertainly, tentatively, partially, and with great effort. Indigenous knowledges, by contrast, are rooted in relationships with and observations of human and nonhuman others. Such avowedly relational forms of knowledge production are, according to Anishinaabe philosopher Kyle Whyte, based on reciprocity, responsibility, consent, and accountability. While these features may not limit the mobility of Indigenous knowledges, they do mean that these forms of knowledge-making deliberately move more slowly, modestly, and collaboratively. On this point, see, Kyle Powys Whyte, "On the Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a Collaborative Concept: A Philosophical Study," *Ecological Processes* 2, no. 7 (2013). See also Robin Wall Kimmerer's essay collection *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013).

For important anthropological analyses and critiques of "Western" or "modern" scientific knowledge, see, for example, Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 575-599; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

On the ways in which the opposition between "traditional knowledge" and "modern science" mischaracterizes Indigenous forms of knowledge and reifies both categories, see, for example, John Law and Sloveig Joks, "Indigeneity, Science, and Difference: Notes on the Politics of How," *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 44, no. 3 (May 2019): 424-447; Tim Ingold and Terhi Kurttila, "Perceiving the Environment in Finnish Lapland," *Body & Society* 6, nos. 3-4 (November 2000): 183-196; Arun Agrawal, "Dismantling the Divide between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge," *Development and Change* 26, no. 3 (1995): 413-439. Historians play a not insignificant role in juxtaposing and hierarchizing "modern" and "traditional" knowledges, and in attempting to translate the "traditional" to the "modern" through the use of universalizing concepts like "progress," "modernity," "the West," "capitalism," and even "history." This very study likely makes at least subtle (and possibly not so subtle) missteps in this regard. Indeed, my attempt to create a single, linear narrative out of possibly incongruous pasts illustrates one way in which the field of history *domesticates* or translates heterogeneous, often non-secular, non-literate, non-human worlds into the supposedly universal terms of Western science, politics, and historicism. On this point, see Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 72-95; and de la Cadena, *Earth Beings*, 91-151.

[11] This notion of power/agency as distributed, ubiquitous, and often decentralized is a key theme in post-structuralist critique. Michel Foucault's oeuvre is a useful and influential starting place. See esp. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 92-102;

Historian Richard White's own analysis of Tecaughretanego, Nungany, and James Smith's difficult winter of 1757-58, however, explicitly demands the separation of meaning from matter (or knowledge from everyday practice) and is worth quoting at length here:

> It was the resistance of adult British prisoners to complete assimilation, abandoning neither their culture nor their religion, that made them bridges to a new middle ground. They made an adjustment to village life that involved something less than taking it on its own terms. The critical part of this adjustment *was not the simple exchange of skills* by which prisoners, for example, learned to hunt or farm in the Indian manner but, *rather, a search for mutually intelligible meanings* by which a common life and sense of the world became possible. The winter that James Smith spent with Tecaughretanego, his Indian brother, in a hunting camp near the Scioto River was spent partly in a 'chearful conversation' that much of the time consisted of a comparison of white and Iroquoian ways in which each gained instruction [emphasis mine].[12]

Here White seeks to explain how a cultural middle ground took shape at a delicate moment during and after the Seven Years' War when antipathy and violent misunderstanding might have seemed like the logical outcome of Native-British relations. But from whence did the cultural understandings/misunderstandings that created this new middle ground arise? White locates the origins in the "search for mutually intelligible meanings." Such meanings were apparently detached from the lived context of learning and sharing skills. They existed apart from the daily struggles to hunt game, tend crops, assemble shelter, or construct tools. These meanings apparently emerged in the self-referential semiosis of language and concepts.

In fact, Tecaughretanego and Scoonwa engaged in conversations about religious beliefs and cultural practices precisely *because* of their material circumstances. Difficulty hunting, low river levels, and Tecaughretanego's own arthritic joints prompted his prayers to "Owaneeyo"

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and Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended": Lectures at the College de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 27-28.

[12] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 327.

(Smith's phonetic spelling of Hawenniyo). Scoonwa listened intently and seriously considered his elder brother's beliefs, understanding that they both sought deliverance from their present difficulties. In the instance of the winter food shortage that opened this chapter, the skills Scoonwa learned from his adoptive kin melded with the will of Hawenniyo to yield a large bison at just the moment when food was most needed. This conjuncture encouraged Scoonwa to reflect more deeply on his brother's beliefs. And the fact that Tecaughretanego revealed those beliefs to Scoonwa on cold, uncertain evenings over cups of thin broth certainly shaped the meaning the young man took from his elder's explanations.[13] Much of the conversation the two engaged in that winter revolved around Scoonwa's "diligence, skill, and activity" or "the hunting and trapping business."[14] The "simple exchange of skills" that White dismisses both allowed the small family unit to survive the winter *and* provided the entry point for discussions about belief systems that formed the "mutually intelligible meanings" that constituted White's cultural middle ground.[15]

If the acquisition of skills and practical knowledge occurred through daily struggles to live on the land, then it should come as no surprise that Native villagers living in the 1750s and 1760s Ohio Country more effectively projected territorial power over great distances than the British army. Highly ductile communities ranged across the countryside during hunts, raids, and annual winter dispersals. During such movements, they claimed and established relationships to hunting grounds, rich bottomlands, strategic portages, and important village sites. By contrast,

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[13] On such indexical elements of semiosis, see recent works recovering the semiotics of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. See esp. Kohn, *How Forests Think* and C.M. Watts, "On Mediation and Material Agency in the Peircean Semeiotic," in *Material Agency*, 187-208.

[14] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 50.

[15] For the material constitution of "culture," see LeCain, *Matter of History*, 109-116; Tim Ingold, "Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet," *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no.3 (November 2004): 315-340; Ingold, *Being Alive*, 156-164; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 132-151, 157-171.

British soldiers moved more slowly, with greater difficulty, and only through narrow channels of trade and communication overland or along mapped riverine systems. As the warfare of the early 1760s showed, British imperial agents lacked the tensile strength of Native societies: stretch them over great distances and they became weak enough for communication and supply lines to break. So, while the British haltingly attempted to establish political control by claiming paper sovereignty from behind the walls of backcountry blockhouses and along thin trade routes, Wyandots, Anishinaabeg, Miamis, Shawnees, Delawares, and other nations and confederacies practiced expansive territoriality across the region, just as they had for decades. Precisely because of their seasonal migrations, their reliance on diverse sources of food, their political decentralization, their increasingly strong intervillage or intertribal alliances (a byproduct, in part, of settler aggression), and their pantheism, Ohio peoples enjoyed far greater control over the countryside. In other words, the British sought to claim territory from its edges—establishing boundaries and then asserting dominion over an abstract colonial space supposedly contained within. Meanwhile, both Ohio Indians *and* white settler colonists in the borderlands of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and (later) Kentucky effectively claimed land by interacting with it, relying on it, and coming to know it in deeply intimate, though markedly different, ways.[16]

[16] Settler colonialism proved to be the most effective method/assemblage of colonial occupation and extraction precisely because it involved consistent and widely dispersed efforts to recruit and deploy the biotic and abiotic forces of a landscape. On the ecological dimensions of settler colonialism, see Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); James D. Rice, *Nature & History in the Potomac Country from Hunter-Gatherers to the Age of Jefferson* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Christopher Parsons, *A-Not-So-New-World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and

Individual Native communities claimed much larger tracts of land than did British or French settler-colonial villages. There are many reasons for this difference. But, crudely put, Indians tended to maximize labor output—essentially pursuing subsistence activities that yielded the most food per day of work. Not surprisingly, then, the nature and geographical location of those activities varied over the course of a year. By contrast, Euro-Americans—who had been subject to centralized forms of bureaucratic governance, land-based labor regimes, and private property rights consecrated in the purportedly universal(izing) language of law—sought to maximize the caloric output per acre of land cultivated. This is, of course, a grossly oversimplified formulation that ignores the complex religious, social, and material forces driving daily activities as well as the many points of conjuncture between all human subsistence regimes.[17] Yet, articulating the difference as fundamentally one of labor maximization versus land maximization does capture a basic truth. Native peoples altered ecosystems and harvested resources in the places where food was most abundant during a given season. Annually, they ranged widely across the land as they moved from winter camps to river mouths to prairie-forest or swamp-forest ecotones and back again. All the while, they distributed their impact on wildlife populations, carefully adapted to particular ecosystems, and gained a repository of embodied knowledge about their worlds. In doing so, Indians established relationships with the plants, animals, soil, water, and weather systems of an expansive and diverse landscape. For instance,

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Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires, and Land in Early Modern North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[17] As noted in the first chapter, formalist economic models are inadequate for understanding human decision-making. Nor can the origin of specific subsistence strategies be explained by theories that posit either an evolutionary origin (genetically encoded knowledge) or a cultural origin (a set of stable practices and cognitive frameworks passed on whole cloth). Rather, as Tim Ingold argues, observation, embodied experience, and situational awareness helped to constitute a suite of subsistence strategies that could be transmitted from one generation to the next during young people's observation of elders and guided engagement with specific environments and tasks. See Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 36-39.

inhabitants of a Wyandot village at Sandusky Bay might occupy an area of nearly two-thousand square miles including winter hunting grounds.

Meanwhile residents of a backcountry English settlement, despite the larger agricultural holdings of white farm families, would develop intimate familiarity with only a few dozen square miles of cleared land and forests along with well-trodden paths through the woods to neighboring towns or eastern cities. Of course, the geographic and embodied knowledge of Anglo long hunters from Virginia or Pennsylvania would be the exception that proved the rule. Often, their sense of the landscape roughly mimicked that of Native communities because their subsistence practices and extensive overland travel mimicked those of Indigenous hunting parties.[18]

Ultimately, the very nature of Indigenous land claims along with the decentralized political organization of Ohio peoples brings us to a key conceptual difference between Indigenous and European understandings of territorial control. Indian territoriality—rooted as it was in actual use, embodied knowledge, and recognized occupancy and usury rights based on kinship and alliance—shared rough similarities with both European notions of land ownership *and* political sovereignty. In fact, in Indigenous praxis it was virtually impossible to disentangle property rights in land from a qualified form of political control. Native rights to the bounty of a specific river, forest, prairie, or village site may not have always amounted to sovereign power, but often they did. Rights to the soil and its bounty produced political power in the form of abundant food, healthy populations, safety, and furs. And no claim of political authority over a homeland could exist without a simultaneous right to the direct, though perhaps not exclusive,

[18] Aron, *How the West was Lost*, 21-23.

use of the land and its bounty.[19] In practice, then, experiential knowledge of and labor on the land, occupancy, and recognized political control were virtually indivisible.

European law, as I noted in the previous chapter, erected a distinction between sovereignty and property. Jurists, scholars, and state officials regarded the power of royal or administrative government and the ownership of land to be separate powers—the first invested in a ruling authority, the second in the rights of private individuals. Even if in practice these powers mutually reinforced one another, they were made to appear discrete so that claims of sovereignty could be more easily mobilized by emergent nation-states, so that land could be more easily and effectively commodified or made profitable, and so that political subjects might be more easily attached to their governments.

In this chapter, we turn our attention away from the concept of sovereignty and toward the intertwined but ultimately more consequential issue of land and property. Historian Allan Greer pithily describes the difference between European and Indigenous conceptualizations of property: "European and Native American approaches to property diverged in one important respect: the former tried to reduce property to a set of formal rules, 'the law,' while the latter, on the whole, did not."[20] This "set of formal rules" would reassure colonizers that property rights were universal and rational; that the law itself differed fundamentally from the chaotic, arbitrary, violent, and savage worlds of wandering Indians; that property and sovereignty were indeed distinct from one another, and that property rights could only legitimately exist when backed by the sovereign power of a government and its laws.[21]

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[19] For a detailed analysis of various Native property formations in eastern North America, see Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 36-55.

[20] Ibid., 11-18 (quote on 13).

[21] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 54-79.

The practical upshot of this difference between Indigenous and European understandings of property, sovereignty, and territoriality is that while the village-centered polities of the Ohio Country extended political control through their direct use of land and their alliances with kin and neighbors, the British believed they could achieve sovereignty—a form of exclusive authority—through the enactment of spatial claims sanctified by law in the form of the 1763 Treaty of Paris and the 1768 Fort Stanwix Treaty. They wrongly thought that the expansion of colonial settlements (i.e., material property regimes) into the trans-Appalachian West would follow quite easily after abstract political control had been secured on paper through the dubious extension of the Covenant Chain.[22] Yet, extinguishing Native claims would require not only the hegemonic application of European legal concepts and practices but also the as-yet-unrealized colonization of western lands by settler colonists. Native bands exercised territorial power in ways that British and colonial armies could not. The material, on-the-ground relationships that formed the warp and weft of daily life and helped to constitute Indigenous power would be difficult for Anglo-American settlers, British imperial agents, or, eventually, the nascent United States to overcome.

[22] Settler colonialism would, of course, end up being the condition of possibility for Anglo-American imperial expansion in both the United States and Canada. Many scholars of the eighteenth-century Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region, and borderlands scholars more broadly, have recognized that power relations in the so-called periphery often developed independently of, though always in conversation with, traditional forms of metropolitan sovereignty. See esp. White, *Middle Ground*, 366-468; Eric A. Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Aron, *How the West was Lost*; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Rob Harper, *Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). See also Gregory Ablavsky, "Species of Sovereignty: Native Nationhood, the United States, and International Law, 1783-1795," *Journal of American History* 106, no. 3 (December 2019): 591-613.

Enacting Territory

In order to more concretely observe these critical differences between Indigenous territoriality and British claims to sovereignty during the conflicts of the 1750s and 1760s, let us focus on the Sandusky River Valley at the eastern edge of the Black Swamp. The permanently populated area near Sandusky Bay served the strategic interests of both the Indians who used the river as a highway between the Scioto and Lake Erie *and* the British forces whose short-lived fort enabled critical lake- and river-bound supply lines between Detroit and forts Pitt and Presque Isle.

From the Sandusky, we can follow the annual movements and subsistence practices of one of the many mixed hunting bands that set out from permanent villages during the late autumn each year. Perhaps the best-known account from the period comes from James Smith himself. The eighteen-year-old Pennsylvania colonist had been captured by a Delaware and Caughnawaga Mohawk war party while assisting with the construction of an extension of Braddock's Road in western Pennsylvania during the spring of 1755. Adopted by a Caughnawaga woman who had lost a son in battle, Smith was quickly apprenticed to his new brother, Tontileaugo. From the Pennsylvania borderlands, the pair eventually traveled to a Wyandot encampment on the south shore of Lake Erie. Smith spent the next four years moving between the Sandusky River, the Cuyahoga, the upper Scioto, and Detroit with Tontileaugo or his older brother, Tecaughretanego. In 1759, he traveled with his adoptive kin to a Mohawk village near Montreal and seized an opportunity to escape to a French ship holding British prisoners. After a prisoner exchange, he returned home in 1760. Smith's detailed account of years spent living and hunting alongside Caughnawaga Mohawks, Wyandots, and Odawas provides insight into the social-subsistence practices constituting Native power even as the text

itself was partially intended to disseminate useful information about the Ohio Country to prospective Anglo-American colonists.[23]

Months after being captured and formally accepted by the Caughnawagas, Smith—or Scoonwa, as he was now called—traveled up the Muskingum River with Tontileaugo. Eventually, the pair made their way down a river identified as the "Canesadooharie" (likely the Black River) to a Wyandot Village near the Lake Erie shore perhaps 20 miles east of the Black Swamp.[24] Collecting peltries the entire way, thanks to Tontileaugo's skillful use of a rifle,

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[23] Smith's account was not published until 1799, forty years after his escape. In the preface, Smith notes the passage of time and his fear that the narrative would be regarded as a "fable or romance." He explains that he kept a journal throughout his captivity and used it to reconstruct events. See Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 3. The 1799 publication date, perhaps not surprisingly, coincided with the opening of the Ohio Country to American settlement in the wake of the Treaty of Greenville. Smith's account offers descriptions of some of the now-available lands and their timber resources as well as an assessment of lands as "first-rate," "second-rate," "or third-rate." The account doubled as booster literature, promoting the settlement and "improvement" of the newly secured United States territory. On the colonial effects of Smith's account and others, see Ursula Lehmkuhl, "Good Land—Bad Land: Ecological Knowledge and the Settling of the Old Northwest, 1755-1805," *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 2 (May 2017): 141-163.

[24] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 16-17. Early Ohio historians debated which river Smith and Tontileaugo traveled down as they approached Lake Erie. While the Black River, with its waterfalls, appears to be the likeliest candidate, some readers of Smith's narrative apparently concluded that the pair were traveling down the Huron River farther to the west and closer to the Sandusky River. While Smith occasionally overestimated distances, particularly during the disorienting first year with his Caughnawaga-Wyandot family, the main source of confusion is a discrepancy in a reprinted edition of Smith's *Account*. In the commonly cited 1853 edited volume *Indian Captivities; or, Life in the Wigwam*, Smith's narrative explains that the Canesadooharie is "eight miles east from Sandusky, or betwixt the Sandusky and Cayahaga [Cuyahoga]." In the original 1799 edition, however, the text reads that the river is "*eighty* miles east from Sandusky, or betwixt the Sandusky and Cayahaga." The Huron River *is* eight miles from Sandusky Bay (and about 25 miles from the mouth of the Sandusky River itself), while the Black River is some 50 miles from the Sandusky River and 30 miles from the Cuyahoga. The likeliest conclusion is that Smith mistook a fifty-mile distance for eighty miles, an easy mistake to make given his unfamiliarity with the countryside, the fact that many of his trips across that distance over the next few years were made on the lake in a birchbark canoe, and that human perception of distance is honed through regularly covering ground on foot, which Smith was, as yet, unaccustomed to doing. One final bit of evidence from Charles Stuart's captivity narrative also suggests that the Canesdaooharie is the Black River. Stuart traveled along a river he called Stony Creek in late 1755 with a Wyandot winter hunting party. Stuart's movements down Stony Creek occurred at approximately the same time that James Smith was on the Canesadooharie. Given the distances Stuart recorded in his account—it took one long day of travel to get from Stony Creek to within five miles of Junundat—we can be reasonably certain that Stony Creek is the Huron River (i.e., Stuart traveled about 20 miles that day). If the Canesadooharie were the Huron River, Smith and Stuart would almost certainly have encountered one another in 1755. On the other hand, it is also possible, though unlikely, that Smith intended to write "eight miles" instead of "eighty" and that subsequent editors somehow knew the nature of the mistake and corrected it. Smith's route to Lake Erie thus followed the Muskingum River to one of its tributaries—either to the Mohican River and the Black Fork followed by a short portage to the Huron River *or*, most likely, to Killbuck Creek followed by a portage to the Black River. For the textual discrepancy, see Samuel G. Drake, ed., *Indian Captivities; or, Life in the Wigwam* (Buffalo, NY: Derby, Orton & Mulligan, 1853), 201; and Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 25. For examples of local historians' debates

Scoonwa nevertheless lamented that despite killing bears, deer, raccoons, and other smaller animals, they saw no sign of buffaloes or elk.[25] Human occupation since the 1730s may have resulted in localized depopulation of the prized megafauna. If such overhunting did occur, it had little impact on human subsistence. As Scoonwa quickly discovered, the Sandusky Wyandots and their kin effectively utilized the bountiful fauna and flora at their disposal.

At the river's mouth, the pair of Caughnawagas joined a large Wyandot camp inhabited by Tontileaugo's wife, her kin, and other community members. Along the shore of Lake Erie, the Wyandots killed raccoons and harvested wild potatoes. To these foods, they added hominy and beans, which winter camp inhabitants would continue to eat during the cold months until supplies ran low. Provisioned by summer harvests, tubers and other hearty forage plants, and plentiful game, the autumn camp held together near the mouth of the Canesadooharie for several weeks before dispersing into smaller, kin-based units.

Tontileaugo, his wife, her family, and Scoonwa hunted along the Canesadooharie late in the fall before burying their birchbark canoes for the winter and proceeding east on foot to a river between the Canesadooharie and the Cuyahoga (presumably the limestone cliff-protected lower Rocky River Valley, though perhaps one of the several smaller creeks in present-day western Cuyahoga County). The group of twenty-one men, women, and children felled trees and

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over the identity of the Canesadooharie, see James W. Taylor, *History of the State of Ohio: First Period, 1650-1787* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1854), 501; and *The Firelands Pioneer*, New Series, vol. 18 (Norwalk, OH: The American Publishers Company, 1915), 1708-1714. For Stuart's account, see Beverly W. Bond, Jr., ed., "The Captivity of Charles Stuart, 1755-1757," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (June 1926), 70-72. While the identity of the river matters little to my overall narrative, attending closely to the specifics of place and movement helps us to better understand Native subsistence practices and territoriality.

[25] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 17. Later that year, Charles Stuart corroborated Smith's observation, noting that few elk and buffalo skins could be found drying at several Wyandot hunting camps in the same region several weeks later. See Bond, ed., "Captivity of Charles Stuart," 70.

constructed a longhouse.[26] After completing the winter camp, women gathered hickory nuts while the men hunted game. Eventually, after struggling to carry the meat from a deer and three bears killed several miles from the encampment, the eight hunters decided to send four of their number to white settlements along the Pennsylvania frontier to steal horses for use as pack animals. The absence of half of the party's hunters saw the camp reduced to "a starving condition," but Tontileaugo successfully killed several bears over the next few weeks.[27] After nearly two months, the hunters returned with six horses and the scalp of a Pennsylvania settler. The women began harvesting maple sugar in the late winter and the children constructed traps for foxes and raccoons.[28] Winter came to an end uneventfully as the entire party moved back to the falls of the Canesadooharie with a plentiful stock of maple sugar and bear fat. From there, most of the winter camp moved to Sunyendeand to begin the planting season. Scoonwa and Tontileaugo continued hunting along the river before joining the community sometime in April.[29]

The village of Sunyendeand occupied rich prairie land near the Sandusky River at the edge of the Black Swamp. Cleverly located to take advantage of fertile soil, abundant fish, convenient access to the lake, safe harbor at Sandusky Bay, and easy hunting in and around the wetland, the community became a hub of activity and a minor commercial entrepot. As the inhabitants returned from the winter hunt, opportunistic French traders arrived to exchange clothing, dyes, tobacco, guns, and powder for furs.[30] By late spring, women planted crops and

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[26] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 17-18.

[27] Ibid., 19-22. Quote on 22.

[28] Ibid., 22.

[29] Ibid., 23-24, 26.

[30] Ibid., 26.

village residents subsisted on hominy, bear oil, maple sugar, and the occasional meal of venison.[31]

During Scoonwa's first summer at the town, the hunters left the village for much of the season to continue waging war in the mountains of Pennsylvania and Virginia. They returned before summer's end with "a quantity of meat" as well as "prisoners, horses, and other plunder."[32] Scoonwa and his kin remained comfortably at the village until the harvest. Autumn again brought a cornucopia. Sunyendeand's farmers reaped corn and beans while the hunters killed scores of migrating fowl that stopped along the wetland's edges to feast on wild rice.[33] Year after year, the Black Swamp forest and the bacteria and flora of the lake drew in the sun's copious energy to sustain life. At Sunyendeand and similar communities throughout the Great Lakes region, the nearby swamp forests, lakes, and other ecosystems nurtured the animals and plants whose rhythms of production and reproduction set into motion Native peoples' seasonal migrations.

Scoonwa's movements followed similar patterns in subsequent years, though he accompanied other mixed parties and took advantage of different regional hunting grounds each winter. In late 1756, he and his eldest brother, Tecaughretanego, traveled with their sister, Mary, and her Odawa and Ojibwe family up the Cuyahoga River and on to the Tuscarawas (a main

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[31] Charles Stuart, traveling through the lower Sandusky in the autumn of 1755, made no mention of Sunyendeand in the account he gave to British officials upon his return home. He did, however, assert that no towns existed in the area, only a small trading outpost at Junundat. Stuart went on to (incorrectly) claim that no sizable Native villages existed near Detroit. Discrepancies between James Smith's account and that of Charles Stuart can be attributed to the time of year Stuart visited these places. As the weather turned colder, villages along Lake Erie and Detroit were mostly abandoned as kin groups moved through the major river valleys in search of game and, most likely, to avoid the bitter winds blowing in off the lake. The villages likely repopulated late the following spring, by which time Stuart was already with his wife in the custody of French priests at Fort Detroit. See Bond, ed., "Captivity of Charles Stuart," 72, 80.

[32] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 28-29.

[33] Ibid., 29-31. Quote on 31.

tributary of the Muskingum). They gathered cranberries, hunted raccoons, and trapped beavers until February. The party then established a maple sugar camp in rich bottomlands near the headwaters of what was probably the Mahoning River. Eventually, the group returned to the Cuyahoga. When the weather warmed, they canoed down the river and into Lake Erie. After a brief hunting excursion on the lower Maumee, the group arrived at the Wyandot village near Detroit bearing a winter's worth of furs and maple sugar, which they exchanged for guns, powder, lead, cloth, tobacco, and paint.[34] In short order, young men from the villages around Fort Detroit joined Anishinaabeg from the upper Great Lakes to continue the war against the British. Scoonwa spent the summer of 1757 at Detroit until the warriors returned in August with horses, prisoners, and provisions.[35]

That Autumn, Tecaughretanego, Tontileaugo, Scoonwa, two Wyandot families, and several Odawas left Detroit to hunt at the edges of the Black Swamp. During the early weeks of the winter season, the party depended on the abundance of the vast wetland. They first encamped near the mouth of the Maumee and managed to kill thirty deer in a single afternoon as well as several migrating geese. The group then parted ways. The Odawas canoed up the Maumee toward a buffalo wallow and the Miami villages beyond while the Caughnawagas and Wyandots crossed the lake to Sandusky Bay. From there, they buried their canoes at the lower Sandusky falls (present-day Fremont, Ohio) and proceeded on foot up the river at the eastern edge of the swamp to the Sandusky Plains near the headwaters.[36] The winter party met another band of Odawa hunters near the plains and agreed to work together in a "circle hunt." Waiting until a day

[34] Ibid., 30-43.

[35] Ibid., 45-46.

[36] Ibid., 48.

when heavy rainclouds settled over the area, the hunters set the prairie ablaze in a large semicircle. As deer fled toward the center of the fire ring, the hunters easily killed dozens. The hunt ended abruptly as the wind picked up and quickly spread the fire across the grassland. By the end of the day, rain still had not arrived and thousands of acres burned. "[U]pon the whole we received more harm than benefit by our rapid hunting frolic," Scoonwa lamented.[37] Thinking only about the short-term gain of continued hunting on the plains, the young man ignored the importance of fire to the maintenance of the ecotone even as he acknowledged that "when these prairies have only escaped fire for one year, near where a single tree stood, there was a young growth of timber…."[38] The prairie remained a large, bountiful hunting ground only because regular fires destroyed shrubs, kept the forest at bay, and spurred the growth of grasses, which attracted deer. Although rain may not have extinguished the fire as planned, the Odawa and Caughnawaga hunters willingly accepted the risk, knowing that a large fire would preserve this important domesticated landscape.

By working the edges of the wetlands and prairie peninsula, hunting parties easily harvested game animals throughout the fall and early winter. The hunters' success depended on the interplay of fire-managed or natural prairies and the adjacent unmanaged wetland and forest ecosystems. In these purposely undisturbed areas, wildlife populations found refuge and were able to replenish their numbers. Such patchy landscapes, then, allowed for the resurgence of faunal communities facing the pressures of human migration to the region and a vigorous fur trade.[39] As Scoonwa's annual travels across the southern Lake Erie basin demonstrate, Native

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[37] Ibid., 48.

[38] Ibid., 49.

[39] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing argues that a key feature of multispecies life in the Holocene was the existence of refugia that could facilitate ecological resurgence. The decline of ecological refuges (wetlands, rainforests, etc.) since the nineteenth century limits our ability to maintain the livable ecosystems of the Holocene as we face

inhabitants relied upon and laid claim to the abundance of the entire regional ecological assemblage.

Movement, Embodied Knowledge, and Indigenous Power

Indigenous knowledge of and control over an extensive domesticated countryside depended not just on the ability of villages, bands, and clans to eke out a subsistence or control the trade in peltries, but also on how effectively they could move across the landscape to claim, utilize, and defend territory. Annual migratory circuits sharpened the war-making skills of all community members. Men practiced marksmanship and concealment while they hunted and learned how to move quickly across difficult terrain. Women and children likewise learned how to adapt to seasonal changes and varied geographies with or without the presence of their young men. Seasonal movement facilitated the development of a variety of skills and practices that honed martial prowess and solidified land claims—both of which made expansive territoriality possible.

Great Lakes peoples relied on impressive technologies, multispecies relationships, and bodily adaptations to travel across a large region veined with navigable rivers. The most iconic mode of transportation was undoubtedly the birchbark canoe. This technological wonder had been perfected by eastern woodland peoples over many generations and was enthusiastically adopted by French and British fur traders. Birchbark was lightweight, strong, and waterproof. It did not shrink or warp and could be easily shaped around a frame. James Smith described his first experience with the marvelously engineered canoes:

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accelerated planetary warming and biodiversity loss. See Tsing, "A Threat to Holocene Resurgence is a Threat to Livability," in *The Anthropology of Sustainability: Beyond Development and Progress*, ed. Marc Brightman and Jerome Lewis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 51-65.

> This vessel was about four feet wide, and three feet deep, and about five and thirty feet long; and tho it could carry a heavy burden, it was so artfully and curiously constructed that four men could cary[sic] it several miles, or from one landing place to another, or from the waters of the Lake to the waters of the Ohio. We proceeded up Canesadooharie a few miles and went on shore to hunt; but to my great surprise they carried the vessel that we all came in up the bank, and inverted it or turned the bottom up, and converted it to a dwelling house, and kindled a fire before us to warm ourselves by and cook. With our baggage and ourselves in the house we were very much crouded[sic], yet our little house turned off the rain very well.[40]

Each winter, Smith's Wyandot or Odawa companions buried the versatile canoes in designated spots near portages in order to protect them from the elements.[41] Charles Stuart, a colonist from James Smith's area of southeastern Pennsylvania, also noted this practice among the Wyandots. After being taken captive in the autumn of 1755, Stuart and his wife were separated from their children and gifted by their Delaware captor, Shingas, to a Wyandot war party returning to the lower Sandusky River. Upon arriving at the Sandusky village of Junundat (Canuta in Stuart's account) in December, Stuart observed the village after the winter dispersal. Wyandots from Detroit, who were likely part of the original breakaway Sandusky faction, traveled up the Huron River, probably following its west branch. At an established location, Stuart explained, "they dig Pitts for their Canoes…. the Canoes are put so Deep in the Ground or Pitts that the Edges are Level with the Surface of the Earth, They make these Pitts Slanting that the Water may run from under the Canoes, which they Raise From the Ground By setting them on Platforms made of Bark and Supported by Peices[sic] of Wood—they make Sheds above their Canoes to Keep them dry and clean."[42]

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[40] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 17.

[41] Ibid., 18, 33, 48.

[42] Bond, ed. "Captivity of Charles Stuart," 72.

Skillfully made birchbark canoes facilitated travel over water and served as temporary shelters when necessary. The vessels enhanced the ability of Native bands to gather food and fur, to trade with far-flung kin and allies, and to swiftly attack or retreat from approaching enemies. Building, maintaining, and piloting the boats required men to spend years becoming competent shipwrights and effective sailors. Such technologies and the embodied knowledge that their construction and operation demanded placed Indigenous peoples at an immediate advantage in colonial conflicts over the Ohio Country, despite their smaller populations and reliance on colonial traders or imperial emissaries for war-making tools such as firearms, lead, and powder.

Native peoples of the Ohio Country also increasingly utilized horses during the 1750s and 1760s. Both Smith and Stuart noted that Wyandots took horses during raids on Pennsylvania settlements.[43] The theft of horses, cattle, and even pigs doubly undermined colonial territorial encroachments by creating transportation or caloric hardships for those white settlers who remained alive and uncaptured, and by providing Indians with fast and reliable transportation or unspoiled meat on the hoof. As scholars of Plains Indian societies have compellingly explained, equine metabolisms granted humans access to the vast stores of solar energy contained in grasslands. When horses ate the sweetgrass, switchgrass, and other groundcover found in the meadows and prairies of the Lake Erie basin, they converted the plants' stored sunlight into muscle power that Indigenous hunters and warriors could mobilize for their own purposes.[44]

Perhaps the most important means of conveyance in the Eastern Woodlands was human locomotion itself. Traversing the countryside on foot—whether between short river portages during the warmer months or over great distances during winter hunts—proved critical to the

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[43] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 19-20.

[44] Hämäläinen, "Politics of Grass"; Natale Zappia, "Revolutions in the Grass: Energy and Food Systems in Continental North America, 1763-1848," *Environmental History* 21, no. 1 (January 2016): 30-53.

survival and prosperity of communities whose sources of sustenance were arrayed across an expansive countryside. While annual movements surely allowed semi-nomadic peoples to develop more accurate mental maps of the land and its features, the very act of walking or running overland situated much of that landscape knowledge not in community members' brains but in the soles of their calloused feet, in their aching muscles and connective tissue, in cardiovascular systems primed by season after season of long-distance travel, and in the quickly reproducing mitochondria that supplied their cells with energy. Nomadic and semi-nomadic modes of existence might transform entire communities of people into endurance athletes—meaning that they came to *know* the land in more visceral, deeply experienced ways than did the sedentary settler colonists or imperial armies who began to invade their territories.

James Smith and others who found themselves suddenly incorporated into Native communities became immediately aware of their lack of both physical fitness and corresponding forms of practical knowledge. During his first winter with the Wyandots, for instance, Smith—Scoonwa—found that he was unable to carry heavy cuts of bear meat several miles back to the winter encampment, despite the fact that every other adult member of the party appeared able to manage similar burdens with ease. He was especially embarrassed when he was instructed to give a portion of his load to "a young squaw" whose load was already as heavy as his own.[45]

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[45] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 19. As a technology of American settler colonialism, Smith's account reproduced the common gender stereotypes and colonial assumptions that English travel narratives and memoirs had trafficked in since the early seventeenth century. Native women were generally not regarded as complex, active agents. They were, in Smith's narrative and others, the silent drudges who bore children, maple sugar, corn, and meat across perceptual and physical landscapes dominated by European (or, less often, Indigenous) men. Scholars have effectively analyzed the power of colonial gender ideologies and rhetoric in a variety of historical contexts while also recovering the dynamism, complexity, and power of Indigenous women. On discourses surrounding Indigenous women, see, for example, Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier*, 1500-1676 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). On the agency of Native women, important examples include Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1793* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

Months earlier, shortly after he had been adopted, Scoonwa had revealed his ignorance of wild game when a Delaware man at a hunting camp south of the Walhonding River (present Coshocton County, Ohio) quizzed him on the origin of a "large piece of fat meat" and a drying skin. Scoonwa incorrectly guessed that the meat came from a bear and the stretched skin was that of a buffalo. "You fool," the Delaware man laughed, "you know nothing!" He explained that both the meat and the skin came from a buck elk. "By and by," he continued, "you shall see great many buffalo."[46] The implication was clear: for now, Scoonwa was an ignorant child. Only the experience of seeing and hunting bison and other game animals would allow him to gain important practical knowledge about the sources of his daily sustenance. Over many months, the Pennsylvanian learned the physical features and habits of game animals as he apprenticed with his adoptive brothers. All the while, he grew stronger and better able to both hunt and carry the dead weight of game animals on his own.

Both knowledge and physical strength originated with the daily subsistence practices that nourished Scoonwa and his kin. The young man's ongoing engagement with the world, exemplified here by game hunting, simultaneously sharpened his "mental" and "physical" acumen. Indeed, he acquired knowledge, skill, and strength from the same activity, a fact which indicates that no ontological distinction actually exists between mind and body, knowledge and materiality, or organisms and the environments that nourish, teach, and, quite often, diminish them. As anthropologist Tim Ingold explains, we often uncritically imagine a "separation between a mind at rest and a body in transit, between cognition and locomotion, and between the space of social and cultural life and the ground upon which that life is materially enacted."[47] In

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[46] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 13.

[47] Ingold, "Culture on the Ground," 321.

fact, though, all knowledge results from material relationships and thus sediments in our corporeal forms as much as in some supposedly nonphysical realm of cognition.

One final example illustrates the effects of seasonal migration on human bodies and the lengths to which Ohio peoples might go to make travel easier or more efficient. In the spring of 1756, Scoonwa took part in a true endurance test. He and Tontileaugo, recently returned from their winter camp to the Canesadooharie, spotted a wild mare, stallion, and colt while hunting near the river's headwaters. Hoping to tame them, Tontileaugo suggested that they chase the horses until the animals grew tired enough to be caught. Scoonwa doubted the pair could outlast their equine quarry. But Tontileaugo explained how he had "run down bears, buffaloes and elks; and in the great plains, with only a small snow on the ground, he had run down a deer; and he thought that in one whole day, he could tire, or run down any four footed animal except a wolf." Likely drawing on personal experience with horses on backcountry Pennsylvania farms, Scoonwa argued that a deer would reach exhaustion long before a horse. Nevertheless, Tontileaugo resolved to "try the experiment." Acknowledging Scoonwa's skepticism the Caughnawaga Mohawk challenged the young Pennsylvanian: "[Tontileaugo] had heard the Wiandots [sic] say that I could run well, and now he would see whether I could, or not. I told him that I never had run all day, and of course was not accustomed to that way of running. I never had run with the Wiandots, more than seven or eight miles at one time. [Tontileaugo] said that was nothing, we must either catch these horses, or run all day."[48] While seven- or eight-mile jaunts may have tested the limits of Scoonwa's endurance, the undaunted Tontileaugo now proposed running 20 or 30 miles.

[48] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 24

Having observed that the horses typically covered the same three- or four-mile route each day, the two men set out after them early the next morning. For a couple of hours, they chased the horses until Scoonwa began to tire. The young man rested and waited for the animals to overtake him as they completed their next circuit. Having recovered for some time, Scoonwa charged after the horses, but soon Tontileaugo passed the Pennsylvanian despite having pursued the animals nonstop. Shortly before sundown, the men returned to their starting place. The horses remained nearby but frustratingly out of reach and far from exhaustion. Tontileaugo picked up his rifle and decided to shoot the mare high in the neck just under the mane to cause a minor injury, which might allow them to get close enough to tether her. The hunter missed his mark by several inches and mortally wounded the mare. The stallion and colt remained by her side as her life ebbed, providing Scoonwa and Tontileaugo the opportunity to easily catch them.[49]

The hunters returned to camp with a pair of strong draft animals ensnared by a combination of firearms, halters, and equine emotion. Ultimately, Scoonwa had been correct about the impossibility of simply running the horses to exhaustion. With cardiovascular systems more than twice as efficient as those of the most aerobically fit humans, horses could easily outrun and outlast their pursuers. In the end, Tontileaugo's horse-catching experiment proved a success. The men captured equine metabolisms and directed their muscle power toward the task of carrying furs to British traders. The lengthy chase also revealed that eleven months into his life with the Caughnawagas and Wyandots, Scoonwa's body continued to adapt to the rigors of daily existence. Time and stress strengthened his heart, lungs, and muscles. But a lifetime of such intense exercise still gave Tontileaugo a noticeable fitness advantage. Lastly, the incident

[49] Ibid., 24-25.

suggested once again the lengths to which Native hunters were willing to go to capture scarce pack animals in the Ohio Country.

Ultimately, seasonal movement across the domesticated countryside enacted and reenacted Native power. Ingeniously designed canoes, companion work animals, and well-trained bodies facilitated Native political control over vast territories even as British imperial agents sought in vain to consolidate power throughout the 1760s and early 1770s.

Native Life-Worlds

Expansive territoriality in the Ohio Country depended not just on the physiological and technical adaptations of Indigenous communities, but also on mutually constitutive cosmologies and social norms that helped to guide collective behavior and produce political power year after year. During his time in and around the Black Swamp, Scoonwa observed his Caughnawaga, Wyandot, and Odawa companions generously share food and refuse to steal unattended furs drying on scaffolds.[50] Codes of conduct requiring hospitality and prohibiting theft indicate that this was far from the Hobbesian world depicted by some Euro-American commentators. At the core of these social practices was a sense that other-than-human entities would care for favored human communities and that seasonal cycles of growth and decay, scarcity and plenty, fit into a natural and perceptible order of things guided by these powerful spirits.

For example, Tecaughretanego's lesson to Scoonwa in the bleak, emaciating February of 1758 pointedly illustrates the belief systems that guided and reassured many Native peoples in such times of hardship. According to the old hunter, a supreme deity— Hawenniyo—took care of his subjects "in time of need." Yet, as Tecaughretanego explained, Hawenniyo "some times

[50] On hospitality, see ibid., 25-26, 27. On the safety of scaffolded furs left near major paths, see ibid., 42.

suffers us to be in want, in order to teach us our dependence on him, and to let us know that we are to love and serve him."[51] In dramatic fashion, Scoonwa learned to trust that Hawenniyo (or God or perhaps the domesticated landscape itself) would always provide nourishment. After discovering and killing a bison a few hours after he had resolved to abandon Tecaughretanego and Nungany, Scoonwa "considered how remarkably the old man's speech had been verified in our providentially obtaining a supply [of meat]."[52] Such fortuitous occurrences simultaneously underscored the socioecological adaptations of Ohio peoples to their environs and the power of spirit beings over humans.

Similar lessons could be drawn from everyday observations about cycles of abundance and scarcity. During his second winter in the Ohio Country, Scoonwa and a party of Caughnawagas and Odawas made camp at the edge of a pond near the headwaters of the Tuscarawas River. There, the young man learned that "It is a received opinion among the Indians that the geese turn to beavers, and the snakes to racoons; and though Tecaughretanego, who was a wise man, was not fully persuaded that this was true; yet he seemed in some measure to be carried away with this whimsical notion." The older man explained his reasoning to the Pennsylvanian:

> He said that this pond had been always a plentiful place of beaver. Though he said he knew them to be frequently all killed, (as he thought;) yet the next winter they would be as plenty as ever. And as the beaver was an animal that did not travel by land, and there being no water communication, to, or from this pond—how could such a number of beavers get there year after year? But as this pond was also a considerable place for geese, when they came in the fall from the north, and alighted in this pond, they turned beavers, all but the feet, which remained nearly the same.[53]

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[51] Ibid., 51.

[52] Ibid., 52.

[53] Ibid., 33.

The following autumn, Scoonwa again encountered this phenomenon of transmigration. As he hunted with Tecaughretanego and a party of Odawas on one of the Lake Erie islands, his companions claimed that "snakes and racoons are transmutable; and that a great many of the snakes turn racoons every fall, and racoons snakes every spring." Once again, Scoonwa explained the logic:

> This notion is founded on observations made on the snakes and racoons in this island. As the racoons here lodge in rocks, the trappers make their wooden traps at the mouth of the holes; and as they go daily to look at their traps, in the winter season, they commonly find them filled with racoons; but in the spring or when the frost is out of the ground, they say, they then find their traps filled with large rattle snakes. And therefore conclude that the racoons are transformed. They also say that the reason why they are so remarkably plenty in the winter, is, every fall the snakes turn racoons again.[54]

Here, the education of Scoonwa (or the reeducation of James Smith) reached a limit: "I told them… I believed that both snakes and racoons were plenty there; but no doubt they all remained there both summer and winter."[55] Other-than-human entities, the young man implied, could be understood logically and without recourse to supernatural explanations. Scoonwa siloed physics and metaphysics. And by highlighting two instances in which his adoptive kin had articulated these boundary-transgressing beliefs, Smith's account treats the transmigration of nonhuman animals as little more than a curious case of ill-informed (though observationally grounded) superstition.

Yet, belief in the transformation of animals from one corporeal form to another suggests two important features of Native life-worlds that may help to explain the success of many Indigenous communities. First, the belief that socially and economically important fur-bearing animals like beavers and raccoons disappeared because of annual cycles of bodily transformation

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[54] Ibid., 46.

[55] Ibid., 46-47.

meant that these creatures were subjects who possessed souls and, by extension, a kind of personhood. Second, and relatedly, the transmigration of animals meant that abundance and scarcity resulted from annual rhythms of material-spiritual transformation that could be understood but never effectively controlled or even manipulated. Collectively, these beliefs underscored the sense that the living world would provide for Native communities so long as humans harmonized their own seasonal movements with the environments and spirit beings who existed all around them and whose favor they courted. Success would not come from vain attempts to bend an inert, profane material world to their individual or collective will. Rather, it would come from accepting the rules of a vibrant, sacred world inhabited by nonhuman others both great and small.[56]

Weak Networks

Unlike the Indigenous communities who made their homes around Sandusky Bay, British soldiers exercised limited territorial power. Officer correspondence from Fort Sandusky in the early 1760s, just a few years after James Smith had returned to Pennsylvania, offers an admittedly occluded view of life in what soldiers regarded as a remote military outpost. Yet, officers' letters do starkly present the problem of subsistence and survival in lands the British never truly controlled. British frustrations at places like Fort Sandusky reveal the limits of empire in the uneasy geopolitical world and challenging biophysical environments of the Lake Erie basin between the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution.

While Fort Sandusky would briefly facilitate more secure traffic between Forts Presque Isle, Pitt (formerly Fort Duquesne), Niagara, and Detroit between late 1761 and the spring of

[56] Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism"; Kohn, *How Forests Think*.

1763, the outpost exemplified (and contributed to) overall British weakness in the region.[57] Initially staffed by two officers and thirty or so enlisted men, but eventually reduced to half that number, Sandusky could barely defend itself.[58] Moreover, like all backcountry forts, Sandusky relied on trade with local peoples and on lake and overland shipping routes that tenuously connected it to established colonial forts hundreds of miles to the east.

Colonel Henry Bouquet recognized that the British forts were not self-sufficient. They might serve a purpose as centers of trade and diplomacy, but they existed only so long as provisions flowed in from the east. Consequently, the colonel's letters to both his subordinates and his superior (until autumn 1763), General Jeffery Amherst, reveal an officer preoccupied with the difficulty of provisioning the far-flung outposts under his command. Likewise, correspondence from Lieutenant Elias Meyer and Ensign H. C. (Christopher) Pauli during Sandusky's early months illustrates the daily struggles to procure minimum rations while minimizing expenses. Such concerns about the effective use of limited crown resources highlight the military leadership's desire to lessen the financial burden of the western country and starkly illustrates the material attenuation of British military power as it stretched feebly westward.

For instance, in his letter ordering the construction of Fort Sandusky, Bouquet outlined what constituted a "Compleat Ration" for the men under Meyer's command: "Nine Pounds of Bread, and Eight Pounds of Beef or Mutton per Week." The colonel also sought to limit alcohol intake by prohibiting Meyer from exchanging liquor with Wyandots and others living in the area and by allowing the lieutenant to give his men a "Jill" (gill or quarter-pint) of rum only on days

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[57] For discussions on the strategic advantage of the new fort at Sandusky, see Colonel Henry Bouquet to Lieutenant Elias Meyer, August 12, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21653, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Leo J. Roland (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1940), 77; Bouquet to General Jeffery Amherst, December 25, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1940), 51-52.

[58] Bouquet to Amherst, December 2, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 46.

when they worked without pay.[59] This last directive sought to maintain order between and among British soldiers and Native peoples by removing the threat of alcohol-induced violence. Further, it reduced the costs of establishing a veneer of control over the region when soldiers could be paid in liquor rather than pounds sterling. The overall effect of rationing soldiers' food, though, was to push much of the material cost of provisioning the backcountry onto the bodies of the enlisted men themselves. To create empire on the cheap, the health of the soldiers might have to be sacrificed. Ultimately, the limited rations and the men's reliance on the meager provisions provided by convoys coming from Detroit, Pitt, or Presque Isle signified and contributed to the limits of the British Empire's ability to project power into the Great Lakes.

As the previous chapter noted, even at larger posts like Detroit, food supplies were often limited—a problem that appears to have persisted seasonally for several years. Bouquet had instructed Meyer to prepare cattle for shipment to Detroit as soon as the latter arrived at Sandusky. In exchange for the cattle, Captain Campbell was to send salt pork to Meyer. Bouquet's letter to Meyer twice listed flour alongside the pork, but both times the colonel scratched out the word, apparently thinking better of requiring Campbell to send any of Detroit's limited supply to the tiny outpost-in-the-making at Sandusky.[60]

Unfortunately, Elias Meyer could have desperately used the flour. After receiving his marching orders from Bouquet on August 12, Meyer gathered a detachment from the first battalion of the 60th Royal Americans. With provisions, sheep, and horses, the thirty-odd soldiers

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[59] Bouquet to Meyer, August 12, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21653, 77.

[60] Bouquet to Meyer, August 12, 1761, 77. Bouquet likely suspected that Detroit would be low on provisions. And, indeed, in an August 17 letter to Bouquet, Campbell explained that he "[s]ent eight barrils of Pork—in lieu of the beef, but I can give you noe flour, I have but one barril of flour left in Store after Sending off Sir William Johnstoun and his Party, and can depend only on about ten or twelve thousand weight from the [French] Inhabitants this year as they have a very bad Crop." See Campbell to Bouquet, August 17, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 66.

began the overland trek across the eastern Ohio Country. They arrived at Sandusky Bay on August 31 "after a very tiresome and disagreeable march." Along the way, one of Meyer's men succumbed to an unidentified illness; two horses were lost—one left on the path to die of exhaustion and the other allegedly taken by Indians (an assumption that later turned out to be incorrect); the sheep experienced such nutritional distress that the heaviest among them weighed only 35 pounds by the end of the journey; and most distressing of all for the lieutenant, the small contingent lost 264 pounds of flour that had been improperly secured to the horse carts.[61]

The loss of precious flour forced Meyer to reduce rations to his men even further. His enterprising attempts to make the best of the situation managed to secure the soldiers a few meals here and there. Observing the poor health of the sixteen sheep that survived the march to Sandusky, Meyer immediately "made an agreement with a savage to kill 5 deer in exchange for 4 sheep. By this," he concluded, "the King will gain provisions for 2 or 3 days."[62] The exchange worked to the advantage of both parties. The hunter cultivated goodwill by helping the soldiers and received four relatively rare (for Indian Country) animals that could be restored to health during the harvest season and later shorn for wool and/or killed for mutton. Meanwhile, Meyer received enough venison to feed these thirty weak extremities of King George III's body politic who now found themselves tenuously situated at Sandusky as the chill of autumn approached.

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[61] Meyer to Bouquet, September 1, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 93-94. Meyer incorrectly suspected that the missing horse had been stolen by Indians. He reported to Bouquet that he and his men had been followed by "savages" between August 18 and 20, or approximately 60 to 80 miles north and west of Fort Pitt. Two months prior to Meyer's march, Bouquet had noted that Shawnees in the area had been involved in a string of recent horse thefts. Such suspicions over Indians' theft of property saturated the interactions between British officers and Ohio peoples. In this case, as in many others, the suspicions were unwarranted. By late September, a soldier discovered the missing horse surviving on its own and returned it to Meyer at Sandusky. For Bouquet's suspicions, see Bouquet to Campbell, June 30, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21653, 66. On the return of the missing horse, see Meyer to Bouquet, September 24, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 132.

[62] Meyer to Bouquet, September 1, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 94.

Meyer traveled by lake to Detroit at the end of the first week of September. He returned with a carpenter and sawyer to direct the construction of the blockhouse, as well as some provisions from Campbell. However, Meyer lamented, the food amounted to "only eight barrels of salt pork. As to flour, [Campbell] has none himself, as he had to supply it to four other posts." Unfortunately, the situation at Sandusky worsened by the day. First, the dogs of Junundat, which were used for hunting and probably numbered a few dozen, chased the detachment's remaining sheep into the woods. After two days spent searching in vain, the soldiers gave up. Meyer reported to Bouquet that "we were unable to find a single one, the wolves (which are very numerous hereabouts) no doubt devoured them."[63] Then, to make matters worse, Meyer discovered that mold had ruined a substantial amount of the remaining flour.[64] By the end of September, the small garrison's situation became dire. "Today I was forced to reduce my men to a half pound of bread as I only have 440 pounds of flour left and I cannot reasonably expect help from you for 20 days from the above date," he wrote. Further, Meyer complained, "As to the venison, I think that if I had an interpreter I could get plenty of it, and at a reasonable price, especially for ammunition, etc." Limited to trading with English-speaking Indians, Meyer bargained with Mohican John ("a good hunter") to bring venison to the garrison in exchange for British artificers building the hunter a house in nearby Junundat.[65]

Desperate for food, Meyer sent two letters to Campbell in late September. Campbell, however, explained that he was in no position to send Meyer provisions. "I have not one Barril

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[63] Meyer to Bouquet, September 24, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 132. Dogs were important companion species for Indigenous hunters in the region. James Smith noted early in his captivity, before arriving in the Lake Erie basin, he got lost near Coshocton while hunting with a dozen dogs. See Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 14-15.

[64] Meyer to Bouquet, September 24, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 133.

[65] Meyer to Bouquet, September 30, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 140-141.

of flour left behind, and for our misfortune there is noe Provisions at Niagara," Campbell lamented, "soe you may easily imagine we Shall be much put to it this Winter, as I am to take possession of Ouatinon [Ouiatenon]. In short I cannot be in a worse Situation for that Article."[66] Nevertheless, Meyer finally obtained a barrel of flour and two barrels of pork by actually sending men to Fort Detroit to beg Campbell for provisions in person. After securing these supplies, Meyer wrote to Bouquet, "This little assistance does not fail to be of great consequence to our detachment, but I cannot yet decide to give full rations as I have not yet been advised of any immediate help from you. My men still seem willing enough but I can easily see, without being told, that they are not capable of fulfilling their duties with their accustomed vigor." Meyer concluded his letter to Bouquet with further evidence of the scope of their desperation: "I am enclosing a letter from Mr. Campbell, so that you can see, Sir, how much this post depends on Detroit and in what need they are themselves."[67]

Meyer's struggles continued all the way through October as light infantrymen arrived at the small outpost near the end of the month after shipwrecking halfway between Presque Isle and Sandusky. The commanding officer, Lieutenant Edward Jenkins (who would be sent by Campbell to command Ouiatenon), was effectively stranded without provisions. Meyer grumbled that "there was nothing for me to do but to send him a canoe, 60 pounds of pork and a half-bushel of Indian corn to help him on his way to Detroit."[68] Stopovers at Sandusky by other light infantrymen and rangers, as well as George Croghan, further reduced the meager supplies. So, in addition to Meyer's unfamiliarity with his immediate surroundings, incidents occurring eighty

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[66] Campbell to Meyer, October 5, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 152.

[67] Meyer to Bouquet, October 12, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 164-165.

[68] Meyer to Bouquet, October 22, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 170.

miles away on the choppy waters of Lake Erie and the movement of imperial agents between the larger forts also contributed to the lieutenant's misery since the success of the entire imperial project was also partially his and every other officer's responsibility. The fragile network of forts, trading posts, and routes over land and water would survive or perish together.

Two months into their attempt to solidify the British presence in the lower Great Lakes, the resolve of the enlisted men at Sandusky began to waver. Two soldiers deserted in mid-October, and extensive searches by four of Meyer's detachment failed to recover them. Meyer once again lamented the fact that he could not communicate with the local Wyandots. "If I had an interpreter I should have been able to get some savages who would have caught them… there is not a soul here who can talk to them for me, nor a savage who speaks English or French." He continued, "I fear we will suffer considerably later because in our present unfortunate position, without hope of any help, we have need of [Indians] both for the hunt and for the Indian corn."[69] Meyer's dependence on both military supply lines and Native villagers was not unique. Most backcountry outposts relied on novel combinations of imperial supplies, goods from independent traders, and trade with local peoples or habitants. Meyer recognized that if he could obtain a reliable interpreter, Fort Sandusky could lean more heavily on Indians for provisions.

Indeed, Meyer set out to take control of trade with the residents of Junundat. He attempted to fix the price of venison and corn, and slowly the detachment began receiving a regular influx of calories from the Black Swamp. With trade, however, came local inhabitants' expectation of gift exchange and more formalized and reciprocal relationships. "The savages come from all directions daily in large numbers and in state, to bother me for provisions, ammunition and presents, (the French have utterly spoiled them) and I have nothing to give

[69] Ibid., 171.

them," Meyer lamented.[70] The lieutenant realized that his already limited ability to manage relationships and trade with the Wyandots and other area peoples would be further undermined if he could not continue French-style diplomacy. Despite Meyer's best efforts, and perhaps because customary gift giving had not been observed since the British occupation of French forts, the Wyandots supplied meat only intermittently.[71]

By the end of October, the situation appeared grim. Dysentery and other illnesses plagued the camp and quickly incapacitated all but six men. To make matters worse, Meyer "had the greatest difficulty in the world to keep [the horses] alive."[72] Even as construction on the fort progressed, the entire camp struggled to survive. For two months, Meyer had ceaselessly agitated for more provisions. Now, his worst fears seemed to be confirmed. Hunger and illness set in as supplies dwindled at Detroit and the Indians discovered that the British were to be stingier neighbors than their French predecessors.

Mercifully, relief finally arrived. On October 30, a detachment from Fort Pitt brought fifteen sacks of flour and four barrels of gun powder.[73] Then, on November 9, a brigade from Presque Isle sailed into Sandusky Bay with an additional 829 pounds of flour (barrels included) and gunpowder. A few days later, seventeen more sacks of flour arrived (half of which were,

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[70] Ibid., 172.

[71] Meyer to Bouquet, November 8, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 189.

[72] Ibid., 189.

[73] Ibid., 188.

however, bound for Fort Pitt).[74] A further 36 sacks of flour reached the fort from Presque Isle sometime in late November when Detroit still could not spare any.[75]

Despite nearly continuous supply problems, Meyer eagerly reported his progress on the palisaded blockhouse throughout the autumn. Taking great pains to convey his commitment to fulfilling his duties as well as his wish to return to Fort Pitt, Meyer concluded one letter to Bouquet in late October with the gentle reminder that he had been tasked only with establishing the outpost. "Rest assured, Sir," he wrote, "that I shall neglect nothing to finish [the fort] as soon as possible, so as to be delivered from this purgatory."[76] As the darkness of winter began to close in around them, Meyer, his second-in-command, Ensign H.C. Pauli, and their men must have all felt as if they existed in either purgatory or limbo—their suffering might be brief or permanent, deserved or not. To be sure, they were not occupying a nightmarish hellscape, but ever since that "disagreeable" march from Fort Pitt in early August, they had experienced malnourishment, routine illness, uncertainty surrounding their diplomatic role with the local Indians, and unreliable supplies of food and other provisions. For all intents and purposes, they were stuck at Sandusky without an end date or clear strategic objectives.

By late November, though, the men finally finished the fort. Yet, keeping the soldiers alive and healthy remained a perpetual challenge. An "extremely mortified" Meyer again wrote to Bouquet apologizing "that I find it necessary to give you so much trouble in supplying this detachment at such exorbitant cost." Despite his earlier attempts to control trade with the

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[74] Captain John Schlosser to Bouquet, October 24, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 173; Meyer to Bouquet, November 15, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 195-196.

[75] Bouquet to Amherst, December 25, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 51-52.

[76] Meyer to Bouquet, October 22, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 172.

Wyandots, Meyer admitted that it was "not in my power, Sir, to set a lower price for venison."[77] Nor was he able to offload low-quality gunpowder without lead. The reciprocal trade relationship that the Wyandots probably expected failed to materialize amidst the fort's perpetual shortages and endless need for sustenance. Nevertheless, Meyer purchased as much venison as he could lay his hands on after deer hunting picked up in late autumn.

Considering Meyer's letters, Bouquet worried about the difficulty of feeding the thirty-eight men now at Sandusky.[78] Because the fort "could not be Supplied with Provisions from Detroit," Bouquet explained to General Amherst, "I have sent them Flour from time to time, and they buy meat of the Indians: They will have Flour lefft [sic] for about 12, or 15 Men till the Spring, but it would be attended with much more difficulty and Expense to Supply a greater Number from this Fort."[79] In short, if Sandusky was to survive, it was time to recall more than half of the detachment. Meyer's short stay in "purgatory" came to an end in early winter.

Pauli, now in charge of a small contingent of troops, faced the same difficulties as his predecessor. Plagued by spoiled venison and low supplies of salt in February and March, he requested Bouquet's permission to purchase a horse from the Indians to buy and transport venison from the nearby village since the Wyandots had grown weary of bringing meat to the outpost with little to show for it.[80] As the spring planting season arrived, Pauli requested permission of the chiefs at Junundat to plant corn near the blockhouse. After twelve days of

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[77] Meyer to Bouquet, November 29, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 213.

[78] On the total number of men, see Meyer to Bouquet, December 9, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21647, 232.

[79] Bouquet to Amherst, December 2, 1761, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21634, 47.

[80] Ensign H. C. Pauli to Bouquet, February 19, 1762 and March 16, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. 1, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 33, 51-52.

deliberation in which the villagers no doubt considered whether they intended to destroy the newly built fort, they decided to allow the British to plant. According to Pauli, "The Indians are beginning to be very quit [sic] and more condent [sic] as they used to be."[81]

Having planted themselves at the edges of the Black Swamp, Pauli and his men attempted to acclimate to life in the region. But the summer months presented challenges. The soldiers had put corn in the ground and were once again raising sheep (probably brought from Pitt or Presque Isle), but green corn and a small flock did not make a cornucopia. The fact that game animals were also lean in the summer meant that neither agriculture nor hunting provided significant calories for the moment. In July, Pauli complained that venison was impossible to buy since the local Wyandots were "hardly able to keep themselves alife."[82]

The meager provisions might have encouraged soldiers stationed at Fort Sandusky to take up foraging and fishing. Yet, Pauli's letters do not mention Lake Erie's productive fishery, the abundant wetland flora, or the maple sugar or fruits that grew in the region's forests. Instead, it appears that the men continued to rely heavily on goods circulating through imperial capillaries from eastern forts to these distant extremities in Indian Country. In July, for example, Pauli sent eight sheep to Captain Campbell at Detroit because the garrison there had run out of meat.[83] The next month, Sandusky itself received necessary assistance. A schooner piloted by shipbuilder Charles Robertson brought twenty-four barrels of flour and sixteen barrels of pork from Ensign John Christie at Presque Isle to relieve Pauli and his men.[84] Christie then sent an additional eight

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[81] Pauli to Bouquet, May 24, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. I, 123.

[82] Pauli to Bouquet, July 23, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 16.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ensign John Christie to Bouquet, August 11, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, 51; Pauli to Bouquet, August 8, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, 48.

barrels of flour and four of pork in September.[85] Whether they occupied newly built forts like Sandusky or long-established entrepots like Detroit, the British relied heavily upon imperial provisioning.

Sandusky, like the other forts, struggled the most when food became scarce for local peoples. The outposts scattered across the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley depended on regular trade with Indigenous farmers and hunters. When the commandants and quartermasters could not pay Indians for supplies themselves, they often purchased goods on credit from British or French traders to exchange or give to Native villagers. When British policies curtailed private traders and gift giving, the forts predictably suffered. So, when Pauli explained that the Wyandots were suffering from extreme food shortages in July, we might wonder whether the dearth of venison coming from Junundat was the result of seasonal scarcity affecting all of the region's inhabitants or, rather, the product of strained trade relationships precipitated by British policies. On the one hand, we know that summer presented particular nutritional challenges since crops were still in the ground, game was comparatively scarce, and the last of the winter provisions (perhaps hominy and bear fat) were running extremely low. On the other hand, the Wyandots' situation in the summer of 1762 may not have been as dire as Pauli suggested. James Smith's experiences a few years earlier indicate that the warmer months often proved difficult when hunting became less reliable. Nevertheless, the villages where Smith stayed (notably Sunyendeand) dependably survived on hominy, fat, fish, and woodland or wetland forage until the hunting picked up again.[86] Pauli may have ignored signs of Indians' diverse food gathering practices, and the

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[85] Christie to Bouquet, September 24, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, 96.

[86] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 27-29, 56-57. It should be noted that Smith's most vivid depiction of summer hunger (1756) was mainly the result of an unusually large number of hunters being away from the village for the entire season as they fought the British in the Pennsylvania borderlands.

Wyandots may not have been interested in engaging in one-sided trade during the summer since Pauli's blockhouse frequently lacked desirable goods like lead, powder, and tobacco.[87] While the Wyandots survived the summer without an influx of provisions from elsewhere, the soldiers at Sandusky appear to have limited themselves to the standard fare of cereal grains and meat and relied on shipments from Presque Isle. Lacking the varied diets, local knowledge, and flexible subsistence skills/strategies of their Indigenous neighbors, the outpost continued to struggle.

The fort also faced epidemiological challenges that might have been mitigated had Pauli or Meyer known where best to construct the blockhouse. In July of 1762, four men at Sandusky came down with fevers, which worried Pauli enough to warrant a request for medicine in his monthly report to Bouquet.[88] By early September most of the detachment had fallen ill.[89] Pauli suspected they had been drinking "bad water." The illness may have been typhoid fever, caused by Salmonella and often spread through water contaminated with human waste. A year into their occupation of Sandusky Bay, the soldiers still found the work of making a safe niche for themselves exceedingly difficult.

By the following spring, Ohio Indians mounted a loosely coordinated anticolonial resistance movement against the British. Being an entirely new outpost, the very existence of Fort Sandusky threatened Indigenous territorial control since it violated Native peoples' understanding that the British would merely take over existing French forts. To make matters worse, in the nearly two years of Fort Sandusky's existence, Meyer and Pauli had proven unable to cultivate reciprocal relationships with the Wyandots, largely because of the perpetual supply

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[87] On the difficulty of supplying gifts, see Captain Simeon Ecuyer to Bouquet, March 19, 1763, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21649, pt. I, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens and Donald H. Kent (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1942), 79.

[88] Pauli to Bouquet, July 23, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, 16.

[89] Pauli to Bouquet, September 8, 1762, *Papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet*, ser. 21648, pt. II, 84.

problems. This friction contributed to "Pontiac's War," the opening stages of which witnessed the successful destruction of Fort Sandusky in May 1763. The Wyandots captured Pauli, summarily executed his men, and razed the blockhouse. In the end, Fort Sandusky had weakened the imperial project rather than strengthened it.

Domesticated Countries

While the struggle to claim the Ohio Country was balanced on a razor's edge between violence and diplomacy during the 1750s and 1760s, Native peoples' ability to control territory and maintain local autonomy depended just as much on everyday subsistence practices and other forms of community care as on the outcome of armed conflict. Indeed, subsistence and war-making were intertwined activities. Indigenous land claims—rights to the flora, fauna, and other productive energies of a place—rested on both the ability to defend territory and on the skill of women and men to grow crops, forage for wild plants, hunt, and fish. By harvesting and consuming the products of the land and water, villages secured more than just basic subsistence. The biological abundance and diversity of the Black Swamp and surrounding environments allowed for resource accumulation nearly year-round, generally in the form of peltries and portable foodstuffs. These surpluses of food or furs promoted trade and guaranteed a community's ability to effectively make war.

All the while, the very practice of securing a livelihood catalyzed important relationships among individuals and between human and other-than-human beings. Daily subsistence activities fostered familiarity between members of mixed hunting bands, between people and the landscapes they traversed, and between mortals and the spirit beings who guaranteed successful harvests and hunts. The act of familiarizing themselves to their environs allowed hunters to hone

useful skills that could aid them on the battlefield. Likewise, seasonal movements and annual cycles of planting, harvesting, and foraging provided women, children, and other community members with the practical environmental knowledge necessary to thrive while their hunters were off waging war. This "ongoing engagement" of mingling individual and collective human labor with the nonhuman world not only underwrote territorial power, but also helped to reproduce embodied knowledge that would sustain future generations and ensure cultural continuity.[90]

The French and English imperial bureaucracies, by contrast, had never effectively extended their networks of power beyond trading houses, military posts, and fragile alliances in the Ohio Country. Although on paper one or another of the European powers may have claimed sovereignty, in practice they exercised little more than occasional influence over the region's peoples and lands. Weakness had always been the defining feature of European imperialism west of the Appalachians. Let us take a closer comparative look at these differences and begin to outline how they would change during and after Pontiac's War and in the decades to come.

James Smith's experiences eking out a subsistence around the lower Sandusky River dramatically contrast with those of the British detachment occupying the same region a few years later. Why? The first and most obvious difference between the communities profiled in this chapter is that the Wyandots, Caughnawagas, and Odawas with whom Smith lived in the 1750s called this place home. The Black Swamp and surrounding environs were part of their domesticated landscape, and so they enjoyed intimacy and familiarity with the countryside. By contrast, soldiers stationed at trans-Appalachian forts inhabited their posts only temporarily. Even if all went well, they would either be reassigned to another node in the imperial assemblage

[90] Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 132-151. As Ingold argues, constantly renewed relationships with both human kin and other-than-human organisms and things forms the basis of Indigenous identities.

or their terms of service would end. Those posted at Sandusky arrived in an unfamiliar place in 1761, and much of the local environment probably remained a mystery during the fort's short existence. Knowledge of regional ecosystems clearly mattered when it came time to meet the daily nutritional needs of a relatively large group of people.

A second, and related, difference has to do with the specific ways these communities constructed their ecological niches (and thus learned about their surroundings in the process). Scoonwa's adoptive family and their kin and allies created a geographically expansive domesticated country in which hunting parties and entire villages moved with the seasons to locales where food would be most abundant. Rich bottomlands and river valleys near the Lake Erie shore provided cropland and fishing in the warmer months. Plains and prairie lands bordering the Black Swamp or other forested wetlands offered prime hunting in the late fall and winter. And hardwood forests, especially east of the Sandusky Valley, harbored sugar maples for late winter syrup making. As they followed the food season after season, Ohio peoples dramatically altered some ecosystems, accentuated the desirable features of others, and left many largely alone. The region became a purposefully organized patchwork in which village sites and some hunting lands were heavily managed through cultivation or selective burning, while unmanaged forests and swamplands bordering these areas provided habitats for game animals, non-domesticated plants, and sources of fuel or building materials.

Indigenous communities thus constructed expansive ecological niches whose borders were often imperceptible to outsiders because their relationships to the animals and plants they consumed did not conform to Europeans' instrumental views of domestication. For example, forests that might be considered unoccupied wilderness to British captives or soldiers were claimed as hunting, trapping, or sugar-making grounds by one or more allied Native villages or

nations. These woodlands might be regularly utilized without being systematically brought into formally recognized domestic relationships of confinement and control. Likewise, Indians enacted property rights and political sovereignty in ways that were inimical to European definitions of political subjectification and property ownership.

On the other hand, while British military outposts might appear to be self-contained and geographically isolated—nearly the opposite of mobile Indian communities—they shared more similarities than we might expect. Like their Indigenous neighbors, British soldiers also required a vast domesticated country to feed themselves. Yet, this country was drawn together not by seasonal movements of communities of people to sources of food, but instead by the transport of food to far-flung peoples. The extension of imperial rule demanded the siphoning of agricultural surpluses and trade goods from areas of intensive cultivation east of the Appalachian Mountains to the western forts. Local soil, water, and sunlight contributed to the survival of outposts like Sandusky only when Native peoples brought corn and venison to the soldiers or when the soldiers themselves planted small plots around the blockhouses. The domesticated landscape of the empire involved not the extensive use of local ecosystems, but rather the establishment of fragile connections between areas of concentrated husbandry and distant forts where settler colonists had not yet ventured and where imperial authority remained limited or nonexistent.

Despite the extensive nature of both Indigenous and British ecological niches, the similarities among the Sandusky inhabitants end there. In colonial soldiers' experiences, only a vast wilderness lay between the towns, farms, and gristmills of the colonies and the distant western forts they now occupied. Unmanaged lands were not part of any domesticated countryside that colonial British officers or enlisted men recognized or regularly used. The

unseeing eyes of Euro-Americans would continue to mischaracterize Native land-use practices well beyond the era of colonial warfare.

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Although the inhabitants of Native villages and British outposts constructed their domesticated landscapes quite differently and although tensions had boiled over during Pontiac's War, Ohio peoples and the British enjoyed a brief period of relative amity between the mid-1760s and early 1770s. According to Richard White, these good relations were generally facilitated by adult Indian captives, English traders and their Indian spouses, syncretic Native prophets, and Christian missionaries.[91] But accommodation and the lack of formal hostilities did not signify friendship, trust, or true peace. Ultimately, the British presence in the Ohio Country continued only with the permission of Native communities eager to engage in trade, yet perpetually skeptical of British intentions.[92]

Henry Bouquet had hoped to alter the power dynamics that left the western forts under his purview vulnerable to attack and supply failures. Years before the arrival of settler colonists, the colonel sought to transform the wilderness into a legible domesticated landscape. Bouquet believed that settlers should build taverns along the route from eastern Pennsylvania to Fort Pitt and he encouraged agriculture and animal husbandry in and around the outpost. Such efforts could help address food shortages and begin the process of changing the western Pennsylvania countryside into a settled landscape recognizable by Anglo-Americans. Unfortunately for Indians, attempts such as these to strengthen Fort Pitt necessitated the destruction of acres of woodland for fields, pastures, and building materials. Even worse, soldiers at Fort Pitt began

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[91] White, *Middle Ground*, 323-340.

[92] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 130.

raising pigs and letting them run free. The swine often found their way into Indian corn fields where they quickly consumed the crops.[93]

British soldiers also used pigs to deliberately transform ecosystems. At Fort Schlosser in the summer of 1764, the engineer John Montresor wrote that one of his men had "seen a Rattlesnake 7 feet long and 22 Rattles and that Hogs are the means of driving snakes from ye settlements, as they even eat them."[94] While James Smith's Caughnawaga kin understood rattlesnakes to transform into highly valued raccoons and therefore regarded the reptiles as integral parts of their life-worlds, British soldiers and settlers sought to eradicate the poisonous snakes. The very pigs that would destroy Native farmers' fields might also rid the lower Great Lakes of these dangerous animals. Of course, Christian stories and iconography associating serpents with the fall of man likely contributed to a desire to exterminate rattlesnakes. The meeting of these competing practices of domestication and niche construction in the trans-Appalachian West years before the arrival of white settlers in large number escalated tensions dramatically. Ultimately, though, British soldiers had little success in extending their influence or accumulating power in and around the Black Swamp or throughout the Great Lakes. Indigenous communities remained sovereign until the 1770s.

Eventually, settler colonists would tip the scales against Ohio Indians. Colonial migrants moved beyond the Virginia borderlands and into the Indigenous hunting grounds south of the Ohio River in the 1770s. Settler colonialism had the great benefit of shortening supply lines. If Anglo-American militia members could rely on food raised or hunted close at hand, they need not concern themselves with unreliable imperial networks. Moreover, the presence of "settlers"

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[93] Gregory Evans Dowd, *War Under Heaven: Pontiac, The Indian Nations, and the British Empire* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 79-80.

[94] G.D. Scull, ed., *The Montresor Journals* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1881), 274.

who refused to actually reconcile themselves to their environments resulted in rapid ecological change including the overhunting of game (particularly bison in Kentucky) and the clearing of forests. Perhaps the most important effect of this rising tide of settler colonialism was the establishment of permanent towns south of the Ohio from which Anglo-Americans could launch attacks far into the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes. The colonizers of Kentucky deployed military skills learned while hunting in the backcountry and brutalized Indian communities in the hopes of extirpating or exterminating them.[95]

While this new threat to Indigenous territorial power would emerge in Kentucky during the era of the American Revolution, the earlier experiences of men like James Smith illustrate how white Indian captives, go-betweens, or settlers could deploy survival skills learned directly from Native peoples to undermine Indigenous anticolonial resistance. After returning home to Pennsylvania in 1759, Smith used the skills gained from his Caughnawaga kin to lead a local militia known as the Black Boys (for the black war paint they donned) against both Native attacks on frontier settlements during Pontiac's War and on traders carting gifts, supplies, and firearms to Ohio villages in the years after the conflict.[96] During the 1763 uprising, Smith explained that he recruited several young men to guard settlements against attacks. "As we enlisted our men," he wrote, "we dressed them uniformly in the Indian manner, with breech-clouts, leggins, mockesons [sic] and green shrouds."[97] Dressing up in this manner—playing Indian, as historian Philip Deloria calls it—hid the identities of Smith and his men, signified "the symbolic overturning and inversion of established social orders," and channeled the skills

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[95] Aron, *How the West was Lost*, 29-57; Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 50-51.

[96] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 59-61, 63-64.

[97] Ibid., 60.

necessary to fight against the anticolonial resistance movement of the very peoples who had captured, adopted, and taught him for four years.[98] Smith translated the skills he had learned from Tontileaugo and Tecaughretanego to his men and remarked on the effectiveness of Indigenous modes of warfare: "I taught them the Indian discipline, as I knew of no other at that time, which would answer the purpose much better than British [discipline]. We succeeded beyond expectation in defending the frontiers and were extolled by our employers."[99]

The exchange of practical skills between Natives and newcomers—the "Indian discipline" that influenced Smith's vigilante tactics and mimetic self-presentation—might have helped to forge a feeble cultural middle ground in other circumstances. But here Smith's efforts to protect frontier settlements and, later, to disrupt supply lines between legal traders and Indians only contributed to the further erosion of sociopolitical relations in the Ohio Valley borderlands.[100] The Black Boys and other, more violent, groups undermined Indigenous anticolonial raiding parties, cross-cultural efforts at diplomacy, and even the political legitimacy of the British Empire in the region.

Ultimately, then, Indigenous articulations of power that were rooted in practical skills could be partially translated—that is, moved with some difficulty to other social contexts and deployed for other purposes. This indexicality meant that settler colonists, backcountry hunters, former Indian captives, traders, and many others could overcome the rigidity of the weak British imperial apparatus by familiarizing themselves with the lands they hoped to wrest from

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[98] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 15.

[99] Smith, *Account of Remarkable Occurrences*, 60.

[100] Perhaps the clearest example of James Smith's use of hard-won Indigenous knowledge/skills against Indians is his 1812 treatise on Indian warfare, published during the final Native struggle to retain sizable lands in Ohio and the Indiana Territory. See James Smith, *A Treatise on the Mode and Manner of Indian War* (Paris, KY: Joel R. Lyle, 1812).

Indigenous peoples and, at times, adopting Indian skills, practices, and technologies to more effectively claim territory or fight Native war parties. The United States would eventually find success by letting settlers do the work of eroding the power of Native communities over several decades. But, as we will see, the Black Swamp remained a critical source of sustenance and vestige of Indigenous power during and after the conquest of the Ohio Country.

CHAPTER V:
CAPTURED TERRITORY, WETLAND REFUGE

Burning Seasons

In late July 1794, the Legion of the United States marched north from Fort Greenville in the Ohio Country toward a reckoning with the Western Indian Confederacy. It was not an easy journey. During the early days of the campaign, General Anthony Wayne's two-thousand men entered the dense forests of the Black Swamp. Although the hot summer had dried out much of the land, incessant swarms of mosquitoes and difficult terrain plagued the soldiers.[1] They struggled "Through Thickets almost impervious, thro Marassies, Defiles & beads of nettles more than waist high & miles in length."[2] A few days into the march, however, the landscape began to change. Nearing the Auglaize and Maumee rivers, open meadows, vast cornfields, and, eventually, riverine towns greeted the army. Wayne and his troops could not help but marvel at the Indians' domesticated landscape. On August 1, one (probably) commissioned officer described a "luxuriantly fertile" "Garden-Spot" with "small Groves or Lines of Trees" that serve[d] as dividing Lines between the Fields and Plantations of its former Inhabitants." The officer surmised that "it has not long since been inhabited by some People, probably by a Part of those Savages we are now in Quest of."[3]

Over the next several days, the legion moved with greater ease as they neared the recently abandoned village at the Auglaize-Maumee confluence, known as The Glaize or Grand Glaize.

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[1] On dried out land, see Richard C. Knopf, ed., "A Precise Journal of General Wayne's Last Campaign," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* LXIV (October 1954), 283. On the heat and mosquitoes, see Lieutenant Boyer, *A Journal of Wayne's Campaign* (Cincinnati: William Dodge, 1866), 3.

[2] R. C. McGrane, ed., "William Clark's Journal of General Wayne's Campaign," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (December 1914), 420.

[3] Knopf, "Precise Journal," 281.

After splitting into two battalions not far from the mouth of the Auglaize, the soldiers resumed their march on either side of the river. On August 8, they passed through "small Clusters of Towns" that made up the sprawling, cosmopolitan village.[4] "Vegetables of almost every description" surrounded the men as they marched through the towns. "Extensive Corn-Fields beautifully green and flourishing, now present themselves to our View," the anonymous commissioned officer wrote with delight.[5] The landscape itself seemed to have been prepared for their visual and gastronomic consumption.

That evening the invading army filled their bellies. "The Whole [legion] abound in Plenty, produced by the Extensive Corn-Fields and Gardens contiguous to our present Encampment," the commissioned officer continued. Faced with evidence that virtually no part of the landscape could be regarded as unclaimed wilderness did nothing to dissuade the Americans. If anything, Indians' transformation of the region only highlighted its ecological advantages and the reasons for territorial conquest. Yet, the commissioned officer's description ultimately failed to acknowledge the ripening fields for what they were: an assemblage of seeds, sunlight, and Black Swamp soil brought together by an immense output of Native women's agricultural labor. Instead, the officer favored a predictably colonialist explanation for the nutritional wealth that pulsed all around the languorous soldiers on that damp summer night. "The flourishing State of the Productions of this Country," he concluded, "convinces me of the Fertility of its Soil, and its Pleasantness."[6] In other words, the obviously successful farming practices of the current

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[4] For a description of The Glaize and analysis of its political importance, see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaize in 1792: A Composite Indian Community," *Ethnohistory* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 15-39.

[5] Knopf, "Precise Journal," 284.

[6] Ibid., 285.

occupants mattered very little; the fecund land would, by itself, easily yield a cornucopia for whomever farmed it.

The army paused at The Glaize to build Fort Defiance and continue plundering the fields and gardens, which contained "almost every species of horticultural Vegetables in the greatest abundance."[7] Finally, on August 15 Wayne's troops resumed marching on either side of the Maumee toward the villages surrounding the river's lower rapids and the nearby British Fort Miami. Three days later, the anonymous commissioned officer once again bore witness to the prosperity of Native communities around the Black Swamp. Approaching the Odawa village of Roche de Bout and several smaller nearby towns, the officer raided storehouses, "extensive and delightful Gardens… producing almost every Species of Vegetation," and at one village "an Orchard of Peach- Apple- and Plumb-Trees."[8] At both The Glaize and the Roche de Boeuf and Wolf Rapids villages, the multitribal communities of Odawas, Potawatomis, and Shawnees had systematically exploited the fertile soils and abundant hunting grounds of the wetland, accumulating material wealth that secured village independence during the upheavals caused by the United States' present war of conquest.

Now, however, after years of repelling American army and militia forces, the Maumee villages found themselves facing a more effective adversary. On August 20, the Legion of the United States caught up with the confederacy, an ostensibly Miami-led alliance consisting of Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, Anishinaabeg (especially Odawas), and Ohio Iroquois (Mingos). The invading force outnumbered the Indigenous army by more than two to one. Not surprisingly, the Americans' superior numbers won the day; they outflanked Shawnee leader

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[7] Quote in McGrane, "William Crawford's Journal," 424. See also Boyer, *Journal of Wayne's Campaign*, 6; Knopf, "Precise Journal," 285.

[8] Knopf, "Precise Journal," 289.

Blue Jacket's warriors and forced the confederacy to hastily retreat toward Fort Miami.[9] The commander of the nearby British outpost, hoping to avoid war with the United States, barred the doors and refused to give aid or sanctuary to the fleeing Indians or their Canadian allies. The Battle of Fallen Timbers, as it came to be known, had lasted less than an hour and the loss of life was minimal. Yet, it was now clear that the Americans could place a large and relatively effective fighting force in the Ohio Country and that the British would not risk war with the United States just to aid their Indigenous allies.

To further damage Indian resistance and assert sovereignty over the region, Wayne and his men followed the battlefield victory with a scorched earth campaign back up the Maumee River. For half a week, the legion encamped menacingly near Fort Miami, during which time they razed the Odawa villages above and below the British blockhouse and burned dozens of acres of corn and other vegetables.[10] As they began the march upriver, the legion "destroyed all the corn and burnt all the houses we met with, which were very considerable."[11] For the next several days they set villages ablaze, sparing only the fields around Fort Defiance, which they picked clean during a two-week respite as rations ran low.[12] All along the Maumee below the Auglaize, Indian towns and crops burned during the final days of August. A season of work and homes a generation old turned to ash and drifted away.

Over the next several months, Wayne oversaw the construction of Fort Wayne near the Maumee's headwaters and several minor posts—Fort Piqua, Fort Loramie, and Fort St. Marys—

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[9] General Anthony Wayne to Secretary of War Henry Knox, August 28, 1794, in *A Name in Arms: Soldier, Diplomat, Defender of Expansion Westward of a Nation*, ed. Richard C. Knopf (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960), 352-353.

[10] Wayne to Knox, August 28, 1794, 354-355.

[11] Boyer, *A Journal of Wayne's Campaign*, 10.

[12] Ibid., 12-16.

in the western Ohio Country. Faced with an intractable enemy so close at hand and so willing to attack homes and villages, many Native leaders agreed to negotiate a permanent peace the following summer rather than risk further officially sanctioned American violence in their homelands.

The resulting Treaty of Greenville, negotiated the following summer, drew a line across the Ohio Country from the Cuyahoga River south to Fort Laurens (present-day Bolivar, Ohio) and then directly west to Fort Loramie and Fort Recovery, before veering southwest to the mouth of the Kentucky River. In return for annuities and the legal recognition of this border between the United States and Indian Country, Ohio peoples relinquished claims to all lands south and east of this line. The Ohio River border, subject of intense warfare since the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, suddenly evaporated.

Figure 10: "Map of the State of Ohio," 1804. Library of Congress, http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4080.ct001520. Indian lands occupy the Northwest portion of the state.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers appears to have precipitated the conquest of the Ohio Country and its Indigenous inhabitants. Nine years after the battle, Ohio became the first state carved out of the Northwest Territory. A year after Greenville, fewer than 5,000 Euro-Americans had resided within the Ohio portion of the territory. By 1800, though, over 45,000 whites lived in the lands between Lake Erie and the Ohio River. And by 1810, seven years into statehood, Ohio's population had ballooned to more than 230,000 Euro-American inhabitants.[13] The history seems clear: Fallen Timbers led directly to Greenville. Using the alchemy of law to transform the violence of warfare into legitimate rule, Greenville established American sovereignty over the entire Ohio Country except for the Black Swamp and the lands immediately surrounding it. The

[13] Resident Population and Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives, United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/dmd/www/resapport/states/ohio.pdf (accessed June 29, 2020).

end of warfare and the legitimization of U.S. claims then spurred a rapid land grab and the destruction of Native communities in Ohio.[14]

Yet, the connections between Fallen Timbers and Greenville are not so simple or straightforward. Translating the violence of war into the force of law required more than just minor military victories. The conquest, such as it was, required Indigenous lands and lifeways to be transformed in novel ways so that a universally recognized American sovereignty—complete with its masquerade of benevolence and its subtle, though omnipresent, threat of aggression—became the basis for a new colonial order of things. At least three critical changes apart from the defeat at Fallen Timbers precipitated Greenville. First, Ohio peoples experienced the growing threat of violence close to home as backcountry militias, especially those from Kentucky, attacked villages and killed or captured noncombatants during the 1770s and 1780s. American military invasions generally proved ineffective, especially when battles involved inhabitants of the Black Swamp region fighting on territory they knew well. Nevertheless, attacks on upper Ohio Valley peoples by Kentucky militias proved that greedy, Indian-hating settlers living in much closer proximity to Indigenous communities could escalate conflict, force village relocations, and disrupt annual subsistence cycles.[15]

Second, introduced diseases and environmental changes undermined Indigenous lifeways during the second half of the eighteenth century. Declining game and seasonal food shortages in

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[14] My thoughts on the teleologies of colonial narratives have been influenced by Ranajit Guha, "A Conquest Foretold," *Social Text* 54 (Spring 1998): 85-99.

[15] On the importance of settler and militia violence to the colonial project of Indigenous extirpation, see Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest: Indian Women of the Ohio River Valley, 1690-1792* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 210-284; Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 59-69, 98-104; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 384-421; Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 97-239.

the Ohio Valley surely helped to spur migrations toward the Black Swamp or, in the case of the Christianized Moravian Indians, reliance on Black Swamp inhabitants for food during months of scarcity. With the upheavals of war and more frequent encounters between Native peoples and American traders, soldiers, and settlers, diseases also spread more rapidly. A smallpox epidemic in the late 1780s decimated the Wyandot population. The relatively effective disease buffer that the peoples of the Black Swamp region had previously enjoyed began to erode. And although the historical evidence remains sketchy, it appears that malaria became endemic in and around the wetland sometime during the final third of the eighteenth century. British and American missionaries, traders, and government agents increasingly reported the fevers and chills associated with malaria as Plasmodium vivax protozoa and their anopheles quadrimaculatus mosquito hosts invaded the Black Swamp and smaller marshes and lowlands. We can surmise that Indigenous communities also suffered from the disease, particularly as they clustered their villages around the vast wetland. Changes in the composition of ecosystems thus compounded the effects of settler encroachments.[16]

Third, amidst violence, disease, and subtly changing environmental conditions, the United States government appeared to offer a return to order. The chaos of frontier violence would be replaced by treaties and friendship, or so American negotiators claimed. The British had made similar arguments at Fort Stanwix in 1768. But, as before, the juxtaposition of

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[16] On smallpox among Wyandots, see Eugene F. Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Zeisberger*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1885), 366. On declining game in the Ohio Valley, see Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 53-57. On malaria, see Mary C. Garvin, "Mosquitoes and the Changing Landscape of Northern Ohio," *Allen Memoria Art Museum Bulletin* 52, no. 2 (2001): 35-41; Ernest Carroll Faust, "The History of Malaria in the United States," *American Scientist* 39, no. 1 (January 1951): 121-130; Randall M. Packard, *The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 62; Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), 62-63. For an early instance of malaria, see Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Ziesberger*, vol. 1, 286.

disorderly violence with the rule of law proved to be a key mechanism of political power. This juxtaposition lent legitimacy to treaties and obscured their true purpose: the legal transfer of land. By the Treaty of Greenville, a decade of American diplomacy had laid real groundwork for conquest by pen and paper. At the same time, the question of Indigenous peoples' status as subjects or citizens of the United States remained just as unclear as it had been in the writings and musings of French and British colonial officials. In order to secure land, Americans had to treat with Indians as if they were independent while still forcing them to abide by the federal government's right of preemption—the exclusive power of the national government to purchase Native lands. This legal doctrine invested chosen Indigenous leaders with the power to sell territory, though only to a single low bidder that utterly controlled the land market through the exercise of sovereign power.

For their part, many westward-migrating settlers who balked at the national government's authority over Indian lands repeatedly victimized Native communities, seeking revenge or plunder, if not always land, and thus threatening the viability or very existence of Ohio villages. Despite this coercive power of settler violence, the United States regarded land cessions as the freely made decisions of defeated Native nations. In reality, the combined force of treaties, land surveys, and American claims of sovereignty exerted incredible extirpative power by shaping Indigenous peoples' understandings of conquest, property, and citizenship in the new American republic.[17]

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[17] On the treaties predating Greenville and paving the way for the massive land cession, see Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 87-97; White, *Middle Ground*, 435-440; Dorothy V. Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism by Treaty in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 149-156; Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 127-135. On the United States' right of preemption, see Banner, *How the Indians Lost their Land*, 135; Jones, *License for Empire*, 148; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2006), 8.

These changes, though uncoordinated and oftentimes unintended, constituted a powerful assault on the village world of Ohio peoples. Anthony Wayne's military victory at Fallen Timbers may have been less important than his demonstration of the United States' new capacity to coordinate an invasion of the Black Swamp, raze villages, destroy crops, capture Indians, and quickly build forts. Ultimately, Wayne's campaign was borne along by a tidal wave of colonial violence decades in the making. Repeated incursions by American soldiers and militiamen, the United States' persistent assertions of sovereignty, declining game in parts of the Ohio Valley, and recent outbreaks of deadly diseases combined to magnify the impact of Fallen Timbers and shape the calculations of the signatories at Greenville.

Despite the outcome of the Treaty of Greenville, American conquest was incomplete. Even after the treaty, the large Indian territory that encompassed the Black Swamp provided the region's villages with a degree of independence from the United States. Here, the role of malaria in the wetland may have played to the advantage of Indigenous communities. Because repeated bouts of malaria confer partial acquired immunity, Indians might have gained some minor advantage against unseasoned American soldiers and settlers, thus increasing the effectiveness of the buffer provided by the wetland. Moreover, Euro-American fears of "unhealthy" swamplands was just as much a deterrent to prospective settlers as the difficulty these environments presented to European-style plant and animal husbandry.[18] The Black Swamp thus kept away white settlers and speculators during the years immediately following Greenville. At the same time, it

[18] On the perceived unhealthiness of swamps, see Bruce E. McGarvey, "Landscape Myths of the Black Swamp: Part 1," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (1988): 57-68; Bruce E. McGarvey, "Landscape Myths of the Black Swamp: Part 2," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (1988): 95-104; Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 79-80; and Rod Giblett, *Postmodern Wetlands: Culture, History, Ecology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 118, 215. On the role of diseases like malaria and yellow fever in thwarting imperial conquest, see the more dramatic examples in John R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

remained an important ecosystem for the wetland flora and game animals that were so critical to Indigenous subsistence and cultural continuity. This multispecies refuge forestalled the most potent elements of United States conquest for another two decades until Tecumseh's War and its aftermath.

Nevertheless, Greenville was an important moment. The treaty dissolved the Ohio River boundary between the United States and Indian Country and began to realize the emerging American vision of western lands as an "empire of liberty," a democracy built on land theft and exclusionary nationalism.[19] This chapter sketches the monumental changes occurring in and around the Black Swamp between the American Revolution and Treaty of Greenville.

Invasions

As early as the late 1760s, settler colonists from Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania presented a greater and more obvious threat to Indigenous territorial control than agents of British imperialism. Settlers more effectively gathered and projected power than did British soldiers stationed in the backcountry. The 1768 Fort Stanwix Treaty had effectively adjusted the Royal Proclamation line to the mouth of the Kanawha River, thereby ceding eastern Kentucky and most of what is today West Virginia to Great Britain. By occupying and nourishing themselves on the bounty of Native lands ceded by the Six Nations without the consent of the Shawnees, Delawares, and Ohio Iroquois who relied on those lands, Euro-American colonizers

[19] Thomas Jefferson twice used similar phrases ("empire of liberty" and "empire for liberty"). In the first instance, in a 1780 letter of instructions to George Rogers Clark, he explicitly referred to the creation of an "empire of liberty" through the seizure of Detroit and Indigenous lands in the West between the Ohio River, Lake Erie, and the Wabash. See Julian P. Bond, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 4 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 233–238.

gained knowledge of the Ohio Country as well as the ability to stage raids on Indian villages from closer proximity.[20]

By the early 1770s, squatters and speculators from Virginia and Pennsylvania crossed the Appalachians in droves, proving themselves to be more dangerous than British agents and more capable of exerting sustained influence in the region. Colonization along with the efforts of speculators to organize land markets predictably resulted in violence. In September 1773, Shawnees, Delawares, and Cherokees sent a dramatic message to Kentucky settlers by capturing and torturing to death two boys, the sons of William Russell and Daniel Boone, who had traveled from Virginia with their families and fifty other settlers. Settler reprisals in the spring of 1774 included the murder of Cayuga ("Mingo" or Ohio Iroquois) Chief Logan's brother and two women, one of whom was pregnant. This violence led to open warfare by fall when western Iroquois and Shawnee warriors met invading Virginia forces. Governor Lord Dunmore commanded the attack and won a victory at Point Pleasant, before marching his army to the Pickaway Plains deep in the Ohio Country. There, nearly within sight of Shawnee villages, he brokered a peace and secured the lands south and east of the Ohio for wealthy speculators.[21] Dunmore's War was a preview of the violence to come.[22]

Indeed, the American Revolution—a conflict fought in part over the unalienable rights of settler colonists to usurp Indian land—gave Virginians, Kentuckians, and Pennsylvanians

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[20] For Kentucky raids especially, see Aron, *How the West was Lost*; Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 210-219; R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 83-111. For comprehensive analyses of the escalating borderland violence between the mid-1760s and mid-1790s, see White, *Middle Ground*, 339-430; Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 44-122; and Griffin, *American Leviathan*.

[21] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 57-59; Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 80-81.

[22] Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 50-52; White, *Middle Ground*, 353-365.

implicit license to seize territory and loot Native villages along the upper Ohio.[23] As ground zero of fighting in the West, the Ohio Valley witnessed years of bloodshed between invading Americans and Indigenous villagers. Unsurprisingly, the fates of many Ohio Valley peoples diverged from Sandusky, Maumee, and Wabash valley residents, who were farther removed from the primary zone of regional conflict. While divided Delaware and Shawnee bands of the upper Ohio either squared off against American soldiers and militiamen or attempted to navigate neutrality, the Wyandots, Odawas, and Miamis of the western Erie basin adopted a more unified militant posture against American encroachment.[24] Relying on their vast hunting reserves, including especially the Black Swamp, peoples of the Lake Erie watershed took in refugee kin and allies seeking to escape the brutal war. From their villages, they launched assaults on American forces and backcountry settlements with alarming regularity.

The Black Swamp also functioned as a physical boundary, shaping how the war in the Ohio Country unfolded in two related ways. First, the swamp separated the Wyandots and Senecas of Upper Sandusky from the Miami and Odawa villages along the Maumee and the British at Detroit. Living at some remove from the upper Ohio yet separated from their allies to the northwest, the Sandusky villagers gathered resources from the Black Swamp and the Killdeer Plains. In this location they could carry out raids against settlers without fear of immediate

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[23] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 210-215.

[24] On the impossible task Shawnee and Delaware civil leaders faced in navigating neutrality, see Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158-181; Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 61-94; White, *Middle Ground*, 384-386; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 65-83. On the Shawnees specifically, see Colin G. Calloway, "'We Have Always Been the Frontier': The American Revolution in Shawnee Country," *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 39-52; and Sami Lakomaki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 102-131. On Ohio Valley conflicts broadly, see Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Eric A. Hinderaker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Rob Harper, *Unsettling the West: Violence and State Building in the Ohio Valley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

reprisal, yet they were vulnerable enough that an aggressive posture was necessary. Second, the Black Swamp also probably contributed to the Americans' difficulty in executing an attack on Detroit. As we will see, American forces at Fort Pitt failed to mount a successful campaign against the British, and their incursions into the Ohio Country were violent, disorganized, and politically ineffective. In the end, with Detroit out of reach, American soldiers and settler militiamen set their sights on a more accessible target: the villages of the upper Sandusky River.

Borderland warfare between Indians and encroaching settlers became common in 1773 and 1774, but it intensified as belligerents on each side received encouragement and material support from British or American military leaders. In 1777, Henry Hamilton, the lieutenant governor of Quebec stationed at Detroit, provided support for dozens of Native-led raiding parties against American settlers in the Ohio Country. The following year, General Edward Hand, the American commander at Fort Pitt, launched an ill-conceived winter campaign to attack Seneca-Cayuga warriors residing at the headwaters of the Cuyahoga River. Failing to reach their quarry and suffering from the cold, the militiamen turned back after reaching the Mahoning River. Early on the return journey they found a small group of peaceful Delawares including a few women, several children, and a man. They killed one woman and the man, who turned out to be the mother and brother of American ally Konieschquanoheel (Captain Pipe). Hearing from the Delawares about a nearby Munsee encampment, Hand dispatched a contingent of militiamen to capture them. The soldiers returned having slaughtered three of the four women and the boy residing at the camp.[25] The war party failed to achieve their primary objective and endangered their relationship with a Delaware ally. Fortunately for Hand, Captain Pipe chose not to seek vengeance and maintained friendship with the Americans. That summer, Hand followed up the

[25] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 68-69.

embarrassing expedition with an unsuccessful appeal to the Sandusky Wyandots to ally with the United States.[26] For these failures, he was rewarded with an appointment to the Marquis de Lafayette's command in late 1778 and, eventually, the position of Adjutant General of the United States Army.

The army at Fort Pitt proved incapable of projecting American military power into the Ohio Country. After Hand's expedition, his successor, General Lachlan McIntosh, slowly organized a campaign to attack Fort Detroit in the fall of 1778. The poorly provisioned force of mostly Virginia militiamen made it as far as the Delaware villages at Coshocton before turning back. First, though, McIntosh ordered the construction of Fort Laurens along the Tuscarawas River. The short-lived outpost was intended to be a "stepping stone" to Detroit. However, it was abandoned the following summer after it became apparent that maintaining and provisioning a distant fort in the middle of increasingly hostile territory would be impossible.[27] Fort Pitt's new commander, Daniel Brodhead assured the Delawares that the fort would be reestablished in order to protect them, but the dire financial situation of the United States as the war dragged on meant that even Fort Pitt soon found itself woefully undersupplied.[28] So, while American settlers and squatters successfully established homesteads in the upper Ohio Valley and provided militiamen who had been physically nourished by the bountiful lands along the Ohio and its tributaries, the Continental Army, much like the British army, and was unable to extend such geographic control into the Native territories north of the Ohio.

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[26] Ibid., 77.

[27] Hurt, Ohio Frontier, 82-84; Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 81; Randolph C. Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio: A Narrative of Indian Affairs in the Upper Ohio Valley until 1795* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968 [1940]), 217-218.

[28] Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio*, 263-264.

American settler violence, ill-conceived military incursions into the Ohio Country, and political miscalculations destroyed Indian neutrality and the shaky alliances the United States had formed early in the Revolution. Between 1777 and 1778, some Delawares and Shawnees began moving their village sites west following a series of high-profile murders: Captain Pipe's family, the pro-American Delaware leader White Eyes (covered up as a case of smallpox), and the diplomatic Shawnee chief Cornstalk by Virginia militia.[29] By 1780, raids by Indian hating settlers and militia further eroded the Americans' blundering attempts at diplomacy, all the while helping to create the effect of rigid racial boundaries between whites and Indians, and shaping regional politics for decades to come.[30] Meanwhile, fur traders Alexander McKee, Matthew Elliott, and Simon Girty surreptitiously left Fort Pitt in spring 1778 and joined the British garrison at Detroit. These three men all enjoyed kinship ties to either the Shawnees or the Delawares, and they worked to encourage the alliance with Great Britain.[31] Finally, the

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[29] For Indian village movements, see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 80-81. On prominent murders by settlers, see Downes, *Council Fires on the Upper Ohio*, 217; Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 75-79; Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 65-69, 88-89; White, *Middle Ground*, 384-385; Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 167-169.

[30] On Indian hating and the culture of violence in the Revolutionary backcountry, see Jeffrey Ostler, "'To Extirpate the Indians': An Indigenous Consciousness of Genocide in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes, 1750s-1810," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 2015): 587-622; and White, *Middle Ground*, 368-396. White argues that "to hate and kill Indians—and to be captured and killed by them—involved, at some level, understanding them and imitating them." However, "Pure Indian hating penetrated the middle ground the way backcountry fighters penetrated an Algonquian village—just far enough to destroy it" (388). In other words, a common world of violence was itself part of an anemic cultural middle ground, but virulent Indian hating could destroy the tenuous accommodation practiced by whites and Native peoples alike. And, indeed, it did. Ostler extends this thinking by charting an emerging "consciousness" of genocide among many Indian leaders who came to understand that violence and its constant threat utterly defined their relationship to Americans. The "pure Indian hating" that fractured attempts at refashioning the alliance politics of a middle ground was recognized by Indians as early as the 1750s, and therefore prevented anything other than shaky truces from emerging between Indigenous peoples and both Great Britain and the United States. In effect, borderlands violence was the product of both racism and a desire to claim Native territory. Indeed, the two were mutually reinforcing elements that sprang from the powerful modernist logic that distinguished between supposedly civilized peoples and savage ones, culture and nature, imperium and dominium. For Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Country, the physical violence accompanying the Indian hating and plundering of this period would remain an ever-present unspoken threat, even in treaty negotiations with the United States.

[31] Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 82.

continued failure of American traders to provide supplies to their remaining Delaware and Shawnee allies in the late 1770s further contributed to the fracturing of the weak American alliance.[32]

Like the other Ohio peoples, the Shawnees and Delawares nearest the Appalachian borderlands prepared for war. The anticolonial resistance movement grew throughout the eastern Ohio Country. In 1778, Dunquat (Half-King), the Wyandot war chief at Upper Sandusky, launched a multitribal attack on Fort Randolph and Fort Donnally across the Ohio River. He and the Sandusky warriors maintained an aggressive posture. In late 1780 or early 1781, anti-American Delawares wrested political control of Coshocton from John Killbuck, who had worked to promote neutrality for years. Hearing that Killbuck had lost control of the village, Brodhead led an expedition to Coshocton and killed several warriors. While Killbuck went to Fort Pitt with the Americans, most Delawares were spurred to join British-allied Ohio peoples.

Violence accelerated rapidly. In the spring and summer of 1781, Delaware and Wyandot emissaries separately attempted to convince the Christianized Moravian Indians, who maintained neutrality, to abandon the village of Gnadenhütten on the Tuscarawas River for fear of attacks by backcountry militiamen or even Anishinaabeg warriors. Both times, the Moravians refused to leave their homes. But in the second instance, the Wyandot leader Pomoacan would not be dissuaded he took the Moravians hostage and marched them to Upper Sandusky. A sedentary winter spent clustered in the relative safety of the northern Ohio Country resulted in food shortages and near-starving conditions at the multiethnic villages. The displacements of war and escalating violence likely made winter hunts too risky for many communities. By the following February, conditions in the cluster of Sandusky towns were bad enough that the 100 or so

[32] Dowd, *Spirited Resistance*, 73-74, 81; Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 254.

Moravians chose to return to Gnadenhütten to harvest the corn and other crops they had left in the fields the previous summer. In early March, a militia composed of Pennsylvanians and Virginians, seeking revenge for the murder of a white woman and her baby in the Pennsylvania borderlands, rode into the village. The militia convinced the Indians to put down their tools and relinquish their firearms. They proceeded to methodically execute the entire village—women, men, and children alike.[33] Hatred of Indigenous peoples and the desire for revenge against attacks on settler communities certainly motivated Colonel David Williamson and his men at Gnadenhütten. But, as Leonard Sadosky has noted, western Pennsylvanians' jealousy at the material wealth of many Indians, including the Moravians, likely factored into their intensifying hatred of Indigenous peoples.[34]

In late spring 1782, Colonel William Crawford led another contingent of Pennsylvania militiamen into the Ohio Country. David Williamson and presumably other volunteers from the Moravian Massacre joined Crawford's expedition. Although General William Irvine had hoped to secure funding to mount a full-scale assault on Detroit, the distance and manpower requirements were too much for the bankrupt United States Congress. Instead, Williamson and others suggested that the upper Sandusky villages were within reach. With 500 men and the approval of Irvine, the expedition advanced from Mingo Bottom on the western side of the Ohio in late May. Apprised of the militia's movements, the Wyandots were prepared. They were reinforced by Shawnee allies, who had recently relocated to the headwaters of the Mad River a

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[33] Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 65-69.

[34] Leonard Sadosky, "Rethinking the Gnadenhütten Massacre: The Contest for Power in the Public World of the Revolutionary Pennsylvania Frontier," in *The Sixty Years War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*, ed. David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 187-213. Sadosky's argument comports with Sleeper-Smith's analysis of the plundering raids of Kentucky militias further west in the Ohio Country and in the Wabash Valley. See Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 214.

day's journey from the upper Sandusky, as well as a detachment of British soldiers from Detroit. Surrounding the militia, the Wyandots and their allies forced the Pennsylvanians to hastily retreat under cover of darkness. Utilizing light cavalry on the Sandusky Plains, the Wyandots and Shawnees pursued the main body of troops. They captured Crawford and executed him in retaliation for the Moravian Massacre.[35]

The Treaty of Paris and end of the Revolutionary War did nothing to quell hostilities. Ohio peoples were, by now, involved in a full-fledged anti-colonial struggle against an avowedly settler colonial nation-state. American raids north and west of the Ohio River continued through the 1780s.[36] Kentucky militias raided villages seeking retribution for wrongdoings or, as Susan Sleeper-Smith points out, to plunder the property of prosperous Indians.[37] Kentucky raids were effective largely because Kentuckians living just across the Ohio from Indian Country had converted hunting grounds initially bequeathed to the British at Fort Stanwix into farmsteads and towns that could serve as nearby staging grounds for swift invasions of Miami, Shawnee, Mingo, and Delaware communities. And when the United States built Fort Washington, Fort Harmar, and other garrisons north of the Ohio, the national government gave tacit permission for Americans to settle in Indian Country. This was especially true considering that influential United States citizens eagerly speculated in eastern Ohio lands. In fact, Congress permitted the Ohio Company of Associates, John Cleve Symes, and the Connecticut Land Company—each a

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[35] F.D. Stone, ed., "Journal of a Volunteer Expedition to Sandusky from May 24 to June 13, 1782," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 18, no. 2 (1894), 151-155. The author of this journal, Baron Gustavus Rosenthal, an Estonian émigré, received a commission in the Continental Army using the name John Rose.

[36] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 216-223, 229-231.

[37] Ibid., 213-215.

private entity or individual—to purchase land years before the Treaty of Greenville, suggesting an understanding of American sovereignty that Ohio peoples did not share.[38]

Settler invasions and land theft galvanized the Western Indian Confederacy, a loose coalition ostensibly led by the powerful Miamis and Shawnees of the western Black Swamp.[39] Miami, Wea, and Shawnee war parties from the Wabash Valley attacked Kentucky and southwestern Ohio settlements in 1789 and 1790. In response, General Josiah Harmar launched an ill-conceived attack on the Miamitown (Kekionga) villages in October 1790. Underestimating the strength of the Miamis and their allies, he proceeded to the western edge of the Black Swamp from Fort Washington. Following the movements of Harmar's men and the accompanying Kentucky militia, Miami Chief Little Turtle led an offensive that scattered the Americans. At the recently abandoned villages of the Maumee-Wabash portage, Harmar followed the American scorched-earth method of defeating Indigenous enemies utilized by George Washington in Haudenosaunee territory during the Revolutionary War.[40] After destroying the towns, Harmar's troops retreated and were ambushed by Little Turtle's men. The loss of life was catastrophic, and the general returned to Fort Washington in defeat and disgrace. The following year General Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory, directed Brigadier General Charles Scott to attack Miami, Wea, and Kickapoo villages on the lower Wabash. In two invasions in June and

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[38] George W. Knepper, *The Official Ohio Lands Book* (Columbus: Auditor of the State of Ohio, 2002), 23, 27-33.

[39] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 224-231. Sleeper-Smith presents a deft account of the geopolitics and mechanisms of conquest in the post-Revolutionary War period from the perspective of the Miamis, Weas, and other peoples of the upper Maumee and Wabash valleys. My analysis in this chapter and throughout seeks to avoid too much overlap with Sleeper-Smith's detailed study by focusing more attention on lower Maumee and Sandusky inhabitants.

[40] On Harmar's defeat, see Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 232-242. On Washington's campaigns against the Six Nations, see Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 69-74.

August, the Kentucky militia managed to destroy fields and gardens, and capture Indian women. As Sleeper-Smith explains, George Washington had "anticipated that abducting Indian women and imprisoning them for a year would disrupt the agrarian cycles of the Wabash villages."[41]

As Scott and Colonel James Wilkinson were attacking the Wabash villages, St. Clair prepared for another invasion of the Miami towns at the Maumee-Wabash portage. In early November, St. Clair's large force of over 1,000 men marched to within 50 miles of the entrepôt before they were attacked by a similarly sized force of Miamis, Shawnees, and Delawares led by Little Turtle, Blue Jacket, and Buckongehelas. The Americans suffered a devastating defeat. With 632 men killed or captured and more than 250 injured, it was the worst defeat the United States army ever experienced. Nearly ninety percent of St. Clair's men had been either killed or wounded. The battle sparked the first Congressional inquiry and exposed the limits of American power.[42]

Indeed, undermining the ability of Native peoples to feed themselves or accumulate wealth by burning fields and capturing women was proving to be the only viable way for Americans to defeat an enemy possessing geographical knowledge, military skill, and the support of entire communities. Ultimately, though, the strategy of disrupting food production by capturing Indian women and engaging in frequent invasions into Indigenous homelands began to wear down Indigenous resistance.

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[41] Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 264.

[42] On St. Clair's defeat or the Battle of the Wabash as it is often known, see Colin G. Calloway, *The Victory with No Name: The Native American Defeat of the First American Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Ostler, *Surviving Genocide*, 102-104; Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest*, 271-282.

Environmental Imaginaries

Indigenous peoples also experienced the American presence in their country in more subtle, though just as alarming ways. Changing material conditions in the Ohio Valley drove Delawares, Shawnees, and Ohio Iroquois north toward the Black Swamp in the late 1780s. The wetland provided for the swelling population at its edges. Meanwhile, in Kentucky and in tracts of land north and west of the Ohio River, Americans enacted a different kind of domesticated country. Unlike Indigenous agricultural practices, Euro-American farmers used plows to turn over soil, raised livestock that required several acres of cleared land, and valued land-use practices that visibly altered or "improved" the landscape. These differing subsistence practices contributed to the creation of environmental imaginaries that rendered places like the Black Swamp unappealing and bewildering to settlers even as it ensured the survival and continued independence of Indigenous peoples.

The historical evidence of environmental change in the late eighteenth century is sketchy at best. It is, however, clear that Kentucky hunting lands and even some places north of the Ohio River experienced declining game populations. Settlers felled trees and destroyed white-tailed deer habitat.[43] They overhunted bison, deer, and gray squirrels. And they exterminated wolves, which caused ripple effects through ecosystems.[44] In particular, the noticeable decline of deer

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[43] On declining deer populations, see Kurt C. VerCauteren, "The Deer Boom: Discussions on Population Growth and Range Expansion of the White-Tailed Deer," *USDA National Wildlife Research Center—Staff Publications*. 281 (2003): 15-20. See also Bob Wilson, "From Noble Stag to Suburban Vermin: The Return of Deer to the Northeast United States," in *The American Environment Revisited: Environmental Historical Geographies of the United States*, ed. Geoffrey L. Buckley and Yolonda Youngs (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 39-55.

[44] On the effects of removing apex predators from ecosystems and on the myth that wolf reintroduction will always restore ecological balance, see Sharon Levy, "Absent Wolves, Ecosystems Changed. Can New Wolves Restore Things?" *Undark*, April 29, 2020, https://undark.org/2020/04/29/wolf-reintroduction-trophic-cascades-colorado/ (accessed May 28, 2020). On wolf extermination in this period and later, see Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

populations affected Indigenous hunters of the Ohio Valley. In response to settler and military raids as well as changing ecologies, Indians retaliated to protect their communities and lifeways. Eventually, though, they retreated north toward lands undisturbed by settler colonists and further from the reach of Kentucky invaders.

For the settler colonists of Kentucky, the declining game spurred even more rapid "improvement" of the landscape. After the Revolution, the population swelled. Men living in the territory appropriated the labor of wives, children, slaves, or servants to transform Indian lands into farms that yielded grain, milk, and meat.[45] In effect, the militiamen who engaged in colonial raids for two decades unleashed much of this farm-grown caloric energy in the violent destruction of Indigenous towns north of the Ohio.[46] Kentuckians depended on these diverse energies to enact and secure their independence from the Indigenous warriors who fought against colonial occupation and from eastern elites, even as they imagined themselves to be autonomous, self-mastered republican citizens.

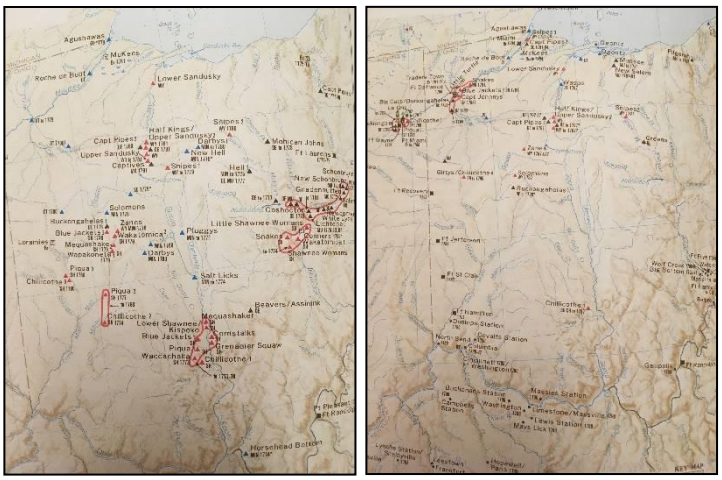

Figure 11 and Figure 12: Migrations of Ohio peoples toward the Black Swamp, 1772-1794. Hellen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 80, 88.

[45] Aron, *How the West was Lost*, 53-57.

[46] This is a gloss on a biophysical approach to studying power and energy systems. My thinking here is influenced by Fridolin Kraussman, "Milk, Manure, and Muscle Power. Livestock and the Transformation of Preindustrial Agriculture in Central Europe," *Human Ecology* 32, no. 6 (December 2004): 734-772; Edmund Russell, et al., "The Nature of Power: Synthesizing the History of Technology and Environmental History," *Technology and Culture* 52, no. 2 (2011): 246-259; Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); and Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 2010): 173-208.

Meanwhile, the destruction of Native fields and villages had the desired effect. Older lifeways that depended on extensive hunting grounds, unimpeded seasonal migrations, women's agricultural surpluses, and local environmental knowledge became increasingly difficult to maintain. New dependencies replaced old ones. As early as 1780, the destruction of Shawnee villages by George Rogers Clark drove hungry and vulnerable people to British forts. One Shawnee chief explained that "Our Women & Children are left now destitute of Shelter in the Woods or Food to subsist upon. Our Warriors have not now even the Ammunition to Hunt for, or defend them."[47] Likewise, as R. Douglas Hurt notes, a few months after the Battle of Fallen Timbers, "the Indians who huddled outside of Fort Greenville, hoping the army would give them food, understood more than anyone the new political and military realities of the Ohio country."[48]

It is easy to believe that American independence might require Indigenous dispossession and immiseration. Independence was no zero-sum game, however. As settlers and the United States government actively pursued one form of landed independence, they chose among many options the ones that would most effectively undermine the lifeways of prosperous and powerful Ohio Indians. By circumscribing Indigenous territorial practices and binding Native peoples more closely to the United States, Americans could produce new materially constituted environmental imaginaries. The most potent of these imaginaries was that of territorial conquest.

After the end of the Revolutionary War, Ohio Indians had actively rejected the conquest narrative promulgated in the second Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1784) and the Treaty of Fort

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[47] Quoted in Sami Lakomaki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 113.

[48] Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 137.

McIntosh (1785). The latter treaty required the signatory Ohio peoples to "acknowledge themselves and all their tribes to be under the protection of the United States and of no other sovereign whatsoever."[49] Indians rejected the notion that the United States had conquered them. At Sandusky in 1788, the Wyandot Chief Captain Kuhn explained to United States emissary William Wilson, "that the Indians would not give up their lands on their side of the Ohio, on the terms that had been proposed [at the behest of Governor Arthur St. Clair], neither would they sell it."[50] And in May, Secretary of War Henry Knox wrote that the Ohio Indians "have expressed the highest disgust, at the principle of conquest, which has been specified to them, as the basis of their treaties with the United States, and in consequence of which, the limits of their hunting grounds and territory have been circumscribed and defined."[51] Despite the continued reality of Indigenous power, Americans understood that the repeated destruction of Native food supplies and homes and, eventually, the capturing of Native women might yet produce the conquest that the United States inscribed into their treaties.

Pathogens often moved more quickly and effectively than human colonizers. In 1788 and 1789 smallpox decimated the Wyandots living throughout the Sandusky Valley.[52] Weakened by disease and limited in their seasonal movements, they experienced a poor harvest and struggled through the winter. Crowd diseases most often affected Indigenous communities on a large scale

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[49] Treaty of Fort McIntosh (1785) Transcript, Ohio History Central, https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Treaty_of_Fort_McIntosh_(1785)_(Transcript) (accessed July 7, 2020).

[50] Quoted in Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, *Indians of Northwest Ohio: An Enthohistorical Report on the Wyandot, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa of Northwest Ohio* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 189.

[51] Report of the Secretary at War: Indian Affairs, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States* vol. 2, ed. Clarence Edwin Carter (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1934), 103-104.

[52] Bliss, ed., *Diary of David Zeisberger*, vol. 1, 362, 264-366.

when they arrived alongside warfare, hunger, or forced migrations. Unfortunately, these were increasingly the conditions throughout the Ohio Country.

Nevertheless, the Black Swamp retained its ability to shelter inhabitants. As a refuge for game, the region's deer and rodent populations likely remained stable even as they declined in the Ohio Valley. Moreover, as malaria became endemic, it likely had mixed effects. Indigenous peoples would have suffered from the debilitating fevers at the same rates as Euro-Americans, but the close proximity of villages to the wetland may have made repeated bouts of the illness unavoidable and thus conferred partial immunity on Native communities. Meanwhile, invaders, depending upon where they hailed from, probably found themselves vulnerable to more serious malaria infections. Indeed, this was the case for Anthony Wayne's troops. As they marched back up the Maumee from the site of Fallen Timbers in early September, Lieutenant Boyer wrote that "The soldiery get sick very fast with the fever and ague, and have it severely."[53]

While malaria may have eroded the health of soldiers, the disease did little to curb another emergent environmental imaginary that coincided with the treaty-made narrative of conquest. This narrative can be seen in soldiers,' Indian captives,' and travelers' descriptions of the prosperity of Indigenous villages and their evaluations of "first rate" or "well timbered" lands and fertile fields. Such descriptions were calls for conquest, a kind of violent boosterism that imaginatively projected American property regimes onto unceded lands.

As with previous French and British imperial designs (see chapter 3), the United States strove to create the appearance of a world divided into two realms: a domain of universal principles consisting of laws and treaties and rectilinear surveys and a separate domain of local environments and particularistic relationships. The United States possessed culture and

[53] Boyer, *Journal of Wayne's Campaign*, 14.

civilization and, therefore, sovereignty. Indigenous peoples existed in a state of nature and savagery. They might hold land in property, but they did not possess radical title to that land. This division between universal principles and local claims—between sovereignty and property, culture and nature, civilization and savagery—was built into treaties so that Indians might ultimately acknowledge the sovereign power of the United States even as they were functionally excluded from the body politic.[54]

Years of conflict, ecological change, and American assertions of sovereignty from the Treaty of Paris to the Indian-rejected treaties of Fort McIntosh and Fort Harmar all functioned in tandem to erode Native power. By the time of Greenville, chiefs like Little Turtle were already deeply skeptical of the United States' ability to craft just treaties or for Americans to treat in good faith.[55] But in order to invalidate treaties like Fort Harmar or Fort McIntosh, which had supposedly already set up the Indian Country boundary now being negotiated, a new treaty needed to be drafted and signed. The negotiations proceeded through July of 1795. Although the Miamis initially rejected the terms, the weakened Wyandots, led by Tarhe, impressed upon the fifteen nations present of the fairness of the treaty, which firmly established a border between the United States and Indigenous lands just south of the Black Swamp. By the end of July all parties agreed to a treaty that read, in part,

> To prevent any misunderstanding about the Indian lands relinquished by the United States in the fourth article, it is now explicitly declared, that the meaning of that relinquishment is this: the Indian tribes who have a right to those lands, are quietly to enjoy them, hunting, planting, and dwelling thereon, so long as they please, without any molestation from the United States; but when those tribes, or

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[54] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54-79; Timothy Mitchell, "Afterword: Are Environmental Imaginaries Culturally Constructed?," in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 265-273.

[55] Minutes of a Treaty, *American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, Class II, Indian Affairs*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 567, 570–71, 576.

> any of them, shall be disposed to sell their lands, or any part of them, they are to be sold only to the United States; and until such sale, the United States will protect all the said Indian tribes in the quiet enjoyment of their lands against all citizens of the United States, and against all other white persons who intrude upon the same. And the said Indian tribes again acknowledge themselves to be under the protection of the said United States, and no other power whatever.[56]

The language of the treaty made clear that the United States declared sovereignty over the entire territory. The Americans exercised the right of preemption and Native peoples were "under the protection of the said United States."

And yet, the conquest was not complete. Circumscribed though it was, the Black Swamp Indian territory provided rich soil, plentiful game, and relative protection in the form of the foreboding wetland. Although Americans read about these fertile lands in James Smith's captivity narrative and other sources, the landscape and its peoples protected one another, even as Indigenous communities submitted to circumscribed sovereignty and territoriality.

Coda: The Zone of Uncertainty

After 1795, the Black Swamp was still, in many ways, an unconquered place. It was the integral ecosystem in a regional domesticated landscape that Indigenous peoples had relied upon for generations. Its usefulness came from the fact that it remained a lightly touched environment. And perhaps the peoples of the Black Swamp were unconquered as well. After Greenville, they were supposedly separated from American settlers by an indissoluble boundary. However, according to U.S. treaties and the ambitions of national elites, Ohio peoples were not separated from the United States so much as they were surrounded by the new nation. The United States created Indian reservations as zones of uncertainty hemmed in on all sides by the democratic republic. In this zone, sovereign power was purposely ill-defined and Indigenous land rights

[56] Treaty of Greenville, *American State Papers, Class II, Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, 563.

remained secure only through the threat of violence and the force of treaties, rather than through older agreements based on flexibility and mutual respect.

After all, former Indian captives such as James Smith, now preparing to publish his narrative in 1799, had participated in a world in which territorial borders were organized in ways that were better attuned to local conditions and a recognition of the common needs of non-sedentary peoples. Smith's—Scoonwa's—Caughnawaga and Wyandot community had embraced multiethnic winter partnerships in which hunting grounds, homes, and food were shared across language and culture. They abided by unspoken prohibitions against stealing the valuable furs that were often left scaffolded and unattended in the woods as they dried. They accepted that food supplies might wax or wane at different times of year and at the whim of various other-than-human entities, but that ultimately there would always be enough. This was not a utopian dream in which humans lived in some fictive and nonsensical harmony with "nature." The Indigenous communities of the Black Swamp forged their beliefs and practices alongside their subsistence activities and their everyday engagement with the world around them. Valuing mobility and flexibility over confinement and control created forms of social stability and territorial power that Europeans had difficulty recognizing. By the early years of the nineteenth century, settler colonialism—in its conquest-driven violence, its preoccupation with ownership, and its guiding environmental imaginary of improving "wilderness"—threatened to destroy the remaining stability and power that Ohio communities living around the Black Swamp still enjoyed.

From the mid-1770s to 1795, United States military forces, militias, and settlers had engaged in often uncoordinated, though always overlapping, campaigns to take the Ohio Country. Through invasions, ecological changes, and the force of treaties, they succeeded in

claiming a vast swath of that country with the Treaty of Greenville. Yet, the Black Swamp still protected Native communities and ensured a circumscribed sovereignty. So, by 1800 the United States possessed a large tract of land south and east of the new Greenville treaty line, while the remnants of the Western Indian Confederacy retained territory west of the Cuyahoga River and north of the line stretching between Fort Laurens, Fort Loramie, and Fort Recovery. But if it appeared that hostilities in the Old Northwest had subsided after Greenville, all parties surely recognized that none of the tensions had been resolved. American independence still relied on settlers' access to cheap nature (and cheap or free labor), while the social survival of Indigenous peoples still required enough space for communities to enmesh themselves in seasonal cycles of planting, hunting, fishing, and trade.

After the treaty, settlers and speculators pushed across the Appalachian Mountains and Ohio River. Within a few years, squatters crossed the treaty line to claim and enclose U.S.-recognized Indian lands as well.[57] During the first decade of the nineteenth century, it became clear to the Wyandot, Odawa, Potawatomi, Miami, Seneca, Delaware, and Shawnee villagers of the Ohio Indian reserve that illegal settlements, competing American land claims (e.g., the Firelands), and a raft of new treaties—Fort Industry (1805), Detroit (1807), and Brownstown (1808)—would continue to erode Native land rights in the newly formed state of Ohio.[58]

Greenville and subsequent treaties were made possible by military force (or its constant threat), continued ecological changes, and by a novel rearrangement of knowledge carried out by American officials under the auspices of the 1785 Land Ordinance and the Northwest

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[57] See Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*; and Mary Stockwell, *The Other Trail of Tears: The Removal of the Ohio Indians* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014).

[58] John P. Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 33.

Ordinance.[59] Surveyors working for the central government or private land companies mapped and divided conquered lands into five-mile- or six-mile-square townships with 25 or 36 sections of 640 acres each. The General Land Office could sell surveyed sections or quarter sections to individuals or companies. However, as previously noted, Native polities could not sell their lands directly to said individuals or companies. The United States government maintained a captive land market. Moreover, federal authorities shaped the contours of treaty negotiations in other ways. Treaties, land surveys, printed maps, and land offices allowed Congress to both define and maintain a monopoly over the most immediately relevant knowledge about that land: its precise location according to the rectilinear survey and its price. Indigenous forms of geographical knowledge rooted in material and metaphysical relationships with actual environments over time had little importance in treaty negotiations or land sales.[60] The growing size and strength of the United States, the pressures of Euro-American settlers, and the inescapable threat of violence induced Indians to frequently treat with American negotiators rather than engage in constant, total warfare. And so, Native leaders entered treaty negotiations at a fundamental disadvantage. Their place-knowledge and embodied belief systems—rooted as they were in seasonal cycles of agriculture, foraging, fishing, and hunting—did not *matter*. Rather, American soldiers and territorial officials concerned themselves with carrying out negotiations based on Anglo-European principles of honorable statesmanship defined by unwritten codes of conduct and the seemingly abstract and universal precepts of the American legal system. Bound by such

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[59] Part of this novel rearrangement involved Anthony Wayne's scorched earth policy in the Maumee Valley and the Indians' subsequent dependence on Wayne for food. See Hurt, *Ohio Frontier*, 138.

[60] On the significance of Native places and relationships, see Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Language and Landscape among the Western Apaches* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); and Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 40-60, 132-151, 172-188.

principles and a putatively fair and rational legal architecture, the devolution of land and extinguishment of Native title now appeared more inevitable than ever to the American officials who viewed themselves as the paternalistic protectors of defeated savages about to be overrun by unruly squatters swarming across the Appalachians.[61]

Even the annuity system established under the Treaty of Greenville, which provided the defeated tribes with annual payments from the government, worked against Indians. The system encouraged close relations with white traders. As president, Thomas Jefferson viewed this relationship, so long as it was directed by federal Indian trading factories, as the key lever to pry away Indian lands. In a letter to William Henry Harrison in 1803, Jefferson wrote, "We shall push our trading uses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands."[62] Debt, of course, functions as a direct claim on the productive energies of people and/or the resources under their control. Therefore, the difficulties American officials faced in directly controlling the land or labors of Indian peoples who devoted themselves to a variety of nonmarket activities at multiple sites of material and spiritual production could be at least partially solved by manufacturing debt.

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[61] Andrew R. L. Cayton, "'Noble Actors' upon 'the Theatre of Honor'": Power and Civility in the Treaty of Greenville," in *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*, ed. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Frederika J. Teute (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 235-269. The problem with any formulation that takes abstract principles like civility, honor, or even the law as a starting point in treaty-making is that historians risk superimposing a seemingly exterior motive force on what were in fact uncertain negotiations. A more effective way of analyzing and articulating the relationship between treaty-making and abstractions like honor, civility, or the law would be to say that American officials hoped to *perform* the negotiations with honor and decorum. In effect, "cultural" norms and the force of law were the *outcomes* of treaties rather than merely the preconditions or driving forces behind them.

[62] Thomas Jefferson letter to William H. Harrison, February 27, 1803, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-39-02-0500 (accessed July 9, 2020).

Settler land grabs on unceded territory sparked one final organized movement against the invading Americans. A pan-Indian confederacy organized in part by Shawnee war leader Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa fought alongside British forces during the War of 1812. After the Battle of the Thames in October 1813 and Tecumseh's death on the battlefield, the confederacy fractured. A second Treaty of Greenville (1814) and the Treaty of Springwells (1815) effectively ended hostilities between the confederacy and the United States, bringing the Northwest Indian nations under the exclusive "protection" of the United States. The federal government, backed by droves of American settlers, firmly shifted the balance of power after 1814. Great Lakes peoples soon found themselves with few options but to surrender their arms and eventually most of their lands.

The Black Swamp had remained an effective refuge and buffer since Greenville. As successive treaties whittled away bits of land, the bulk of the territory encompassing the Black Swamp and the Maumee and Sandusky villages along its edges remained Native territory. As American vessels increasingly plied the waters of Lake Erie, Indians appear to have regularly depended on overland travel through the extensive wetland. Indian paths followed sandy beach ridges and glacial moraines that remained relatively dry during even the wettest spring months, making travel, hunting, and trade relatively easy.[63] Often unaware of these routes, potential settlers in the early nineteenth century avoided the region whenever possible. And as in previous decades, malaria posed a serious threat to outsiders who had not previously suffered bouts of the disease. In a few short years after the War of 1812, the United States eroded the buffer provided by the wetland and destroyed Native communities' ability to safeguard the Black Swamp and other local ecosystems. In 1812, General William Hull had marched his men through the Black

[63] Frank Wilcox, *Ohio Indian Trails*, Third Ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015).

Swamp, much as Anthony Wayne had done 18 years earlier. Hull constructed Forts McArthur and Findlay en route to the lower Maumee River.[64] This path, the first permanent trail blazed through the wetland by non-Indians, was just the beginning. Other efforts such as the Maumee-Western Reserve Road, a corduroy road built through the heart of the swamp in the 1820s, further eroded the wetland buffer.[65]

By 1815, white homesteaders had begun to invade the Maumee and Sandusky valleys, despite the fact that both rivers were part of a large Indian territory recognized by the United States government. The Maumee settler John E. Hunt provides a useful example of the rapid and compounding effects individual colonizers could have. In 1815, Hunt, an eighteen-year-old who had spent the war years marching alongside his brother-in-law in Hull's army, living under siege in Detroit, and working with his older brother among the soldiers at Fort Wayne, arrived in the lower Maumee Valley (in present-day Maumee, Ohio) and felled trees to build a homestead. He soon opened a public house and hotel, and eventually became a successful speculator, buying and selling both improved and unimproved lands to settlers.[66] By the 1840s, he had parleyed early financial successes and personal connections into a modest political career in which he

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[64] John E. Hunt, *The John Hunt Memoirs: Early Years of the Maumee Basin, 1812-1835*, Richard J. Wright, ed. (Maumee, OH: Maumee Valley Historical Society, 1979), 6.

[65] On the argument in favor of constructing the Maumee-Western Reserve Road, see Lewis Cass and Duncan McArthur letter to George Graham, Acting Secretary of War, *American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, Class II, Indian Affairs*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1834), 132-133.

[66] Richard J. Wright, "Introduction," in Hunt, *Memoirs*, vii; Harvey Scribner, ed. *Memoirs of Lucas County and the City of Toledo: From the earliest historical times down to the present, including a genealogical and biographical record of representative families* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Association, 1910), 171. Hunt ran advertisements in his local newspaper for both his store and farmland to rent. See *Maumee Express*, April 8, 1837; and *Maumee Express*, November 11, 1837. He apparently had regular cash flow problems between the late 1830s and mid-1840s. He advertised an announcement requesting repayment of outstanding debts in *Maumee Express*, March 10, 1838; and *Maumee Express*, September 1, 1838. His name later appeared on lists of delinquent property owners in 1839 and 1846. See "Notice," *Maumee Express*, November 9, 1839 and "A List of Lands and Town Lots," *Supplement to The Kalida Venture*, November 26, 1846, 1.

served two terms in the Ohio General Assembly and spearheaded civic efforts to improve the Maumee River and construct canals. In his later years, he also invested in several railroad corporations.[67] Early successes and the theft of Indian land merely allowed Hunt to accumulate influence and amplify his power to reshape the landscape. From homesteading to land speculation to canal lobbying to railroad investing, Hunt's endeavors helped to transform the Maumee Valley and the Black Swamp both before and after the 1830s wave of Indian deportations to territory beyond the Mississippi.

Much as land surveying and the creation of the treaty polity made Indigenous ways of knowing and navigating landscapes less politically efficacious, early internal improvements also undermined Indian autonomy in a variety of ways. As settlers like Hunt felled trees, cleared land, began digging drainage ditches, and built transportation infrastructures, they altered the habitats of large game, fur-bearing rodents, and waterfowl.[68] American settlement was thus undergirded by a three-fold project. First, the construction of roads, canals, and, later, railroads made the penetration of Northwest Ohio by migrants much easier. Second, infrastructure projects functioned alongside government surveys, treaties, land sales, and the regular military presence in the region to enhance the authority and operational capacity of all levels of government. In fact, it is out of these programs that "the state" actually came into existence and began to occupy

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[67] On Hunt's role in promoting railroad ventures, see "An Act to Incorporate the Bucyrus and Fremont Railroad Company," reprinted in *Fremont Freeman*, August 10, 1850, 1; "Cleveland and Maumee Railroad Comp.," *Fremont Freeman*, September 14, 1850, 22; "Toledo & Columbus R. R.," *Wyandot Republican*, May 30, 1872.

[68] On the decline of game in the region, see Nevin Otto Winter, *A History of Northwest Ohio: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress and Development from the first European Exploration of the Maumee and Sandusky Valley and the Adjacent Shores of Lake Erie, Down to the Present Time*, Volume 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1917), 199. On early drainage efforts, see Daniel Agyei Dwarko, "The Settler in the Maumee Valley: Henry, Lucas, and Wood Counties, Ohio, 1830-1860" (PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 1981), 132-177.

the imaginations of people like Hunt.[69] Third, although the Black Swamp continued to exist as an almost unbroken network of forests, marshes, meadows, and wet prairies, its capacity to work reciprocally with the Indians living on its borders was substantially eroded by American infrastructures of land redistribution, transportation, and commerce. In effect, Native communities found it increasingly difficult to practice the kinds of relationships with other-than-human kin that comprised their very cultures.

Taken together, the ways in which colonial power functioned between the Treaty of Greenville and the late 1810s chiefly involved a series of material rearrangements that give the effect of rational, abstract governmental authority slowly blanketing the frontier. The reality, though, is that the power of the United States extended itself piecemeal along the same channels as Indigenous power. Treaty negotiations had been useful for both Natives and Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but tensions during the first centuries of sustained contact were frequently smoothed over through gift exchange, military alliances, intermarriage, the adoption of fictive kin, and robust trade. Women thus played essential roles in promoting diplomacy. Now, however, Americans relied almost exclusively on treaty negotiations that were gendered male. Native women found themselves largely barred from the important political roles they had enjoyed when negotiating with French officials or French and British traders prior to the 1790s. Moreover, American treaty negotiators could now privilege their surveyors' hard-won geographic knowledge divorced from the spiritual meaning or cultural significance that Indian peoples still enacted with the land through hunting, farming, foraging, seasonal migrations, and trade. Americans could easily point to the rapid pace of settlement along the "frontier" as

[69] On the production of the state, see Brian Balogh, *A Government out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

evidence of the inevitability of Indian decline. But infrastructure projects like corduroy roads, canals, and railroads facilitated the movement of white settlers and literally penetrated the Black Swamp ecosystem, beginning a period of steady biodiversity loss as farms replaced forests and clay drainage tile replaced clay subsoil. Maumee Valley Odawas, Wyandots, Miamis, Shawnees and others could only watch as the power that inhered in the wetland and their knowledge of the passable routes through the swamp began to erode. Finally, private traders and Indian Affairs officials manufactured debt to stake a claim to the productivity of Native lifeworlds.

In the wake of military defeat in 1813 and subsequent settler invasions that failed to honor the remaining boundaries of the Greenville Treaty, Ohio peoples found themselves finally unable to protect their Black Swamp homeland. In March 1817, George Graham, Acting Secretary of War, wrote to Lewis Cass, the territorial governor or Michigan, requesting that Cass "obtain a cession of the land lying north and east of the road leading from Fort Meigs to the reservation on Sandusky, and from thence to Norton in Ohio; or, what would be preferable, a relinquishment of the land north and east of a line to be run directly from Fort Meigs to the point where the road from Sandusky to Norton crosses the Indian boundary line." By May, Cass had made overtures to the Ohio Indian nations and was authorized to begin treaty negotiations.[70]

John Hunt and his partner Robert Forsyth's public house and hotel, Bachelors Hall, had opened the previous year and earned a reputation as a comfortable stopover. Cass, a friend of John's elder brother, sent John a letter asking if he and Forsyth could build a council house and host the treaty negotiations in September. Hunt readily agreed, and the parties began to congregate around Maumee late in the summer.[71]

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[70] George Graham, Acting Secretary of War, to Lewis Cass, April 19, 1817, In *American State Papers, Class II, Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, 136.

[71] Hunt, *Memoirs*, 61.

As the negotiations opened, the Odawa leader Meskema (Mash-ke-mau), who Hunt described as "a great friend of the British," stood up and proclaimed that "he saw distinctly what… the President wanted, it was to cheat them again as they had been cheated from the beginning by the Whites." According to Hunt, Cass replied that "he was glad to find the Indians had so fine an Orrator [sic], to plead their cause, and one who understood the history of the wrongs of their red bretheren [sic], that what he said was strictly true. That the first white man that cheated them was their French Father [and] that the second white man that cheated them *the most* [emphasis Hunt] was their British Father." According to Hunt, Meskema then jumped from his seat and "advancing towards Genl. Cass with his tommy hawk raised and taping [sic] the Genl. on the breast said, 'Cass, you lie, you lie,' he frothed at the mouth and acted like a mad bull. I expected every moment that he would kill the Genl. but the Genl. kept perfectly cool and told Capt. Knaggs the interpreter to take that *Squaw* [emphasis Hunt] away and put a petty coat upon her, nothing could be more insulting to a Warrier [sic] than this, and he raved more than ever." [72]

Cass had simultaneously professed American innocence and invalidated the outrage of the Odawa leader. Unfair treatment may have characterized the relationship between European empires and Native peoples, Cass acknowledged, but it did not accurately represent the Americans' negotiations with Indians. Meskema's injection of anger into what were meant to be peaceable opening discussions further invalidated his argument in the eyes of the Americans. Cass's feminization of the warrior was intended to cause embarrassment, to signal that the norms

[72] Ibid., 63.

of the negotiations had been breached, and possibly to reference the long-standing argument by Europeans that Native American cultures inverted proper gender roles.[73]

The conflict at the heart of the treaty negotiations, dramatized by Meskema's anger and Cass's trivialization of that anger, turned on the fact that American officials believed they could create an honorable and civil colonial order that would transfer some (or most) Indian land, and that would legitimate orderly white settlement on the "frontier" while still protecting a severely circumscribed and limited Indian sovereignty. However, the documents recorded by and produced out of U.S.-led negotiations elided any discussions of Indigenous cosmologies or subsistence practices. So, the treaty—the legal technology that would seek to shape future action—rendered an inert, static landscape as its object, thus reifying the abstractions and simplifications already effected by surveyors and map makers. While Meskema and others cited a dishonorable desire among American officials to "cheat" Indians out of their land, a subtler form of power was already at work in this and every other American treaty. That power separated the spiritual from the material. If politics and law gained legitimacy by appearing abstract and universal, then the unified worlds of religious belief, politics, society, and nature enacted by Indigenous cultures of the Americas could not serve as the basis for Euro-American legal architectures.[74]

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[73] On European responses to Indigenous women and agriculture, see Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 243-279.

[74] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 54-79.

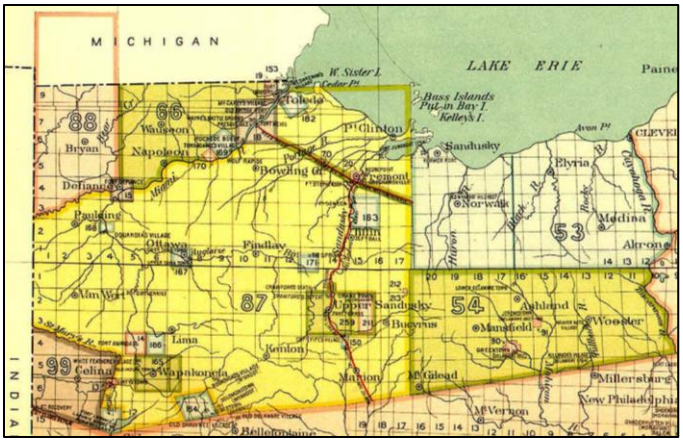

Figure 13: The Greenville Treaty Line (1795) along with the smaller reservations established after the Treaty of Fort Meigs (1817). Image from Charles Royce, *Bureau of American Ethnology Eighteenth Annual Report, pt. 2*, plate 49.

The negotiations at Maumee lasted for most of the month of September before the drafting and signing of the final treaty that would once again remake the relationship between Natives and settlers. The Treaty of Fort Meigs (or Treaty of the Maumee Rapids, as it is sometimes known) effectively set up small reservations or private parcels for the Odawa, Wyandot, Seneca, Shawnee, Delaware, and Potawatomi bands in the region.[75] The great Indian reserve established by the Treaty of Greenville was now conquered. All that remained of Indigenous lands in the region were small, isolated reservations. Nevertheless, Indigenous communities retained hunting rights to lands not yet purchased by white settlers. Hope now rested with the Black Swamp itself. Would the wetland sufficiently slow or stem the tide of American settlement, or would Indigenous villagers alter their lifeways and live on small, individual farmsteads?

Not surprisingly, settler colonists soon began arriving in the Maumee and Sandusky valleys. Although generally avoiding the swamp forests, marshes, and wet prairies, American towns grew rapidly along the widest parts of the rivers and the Lake Erie shoreline. Demographic shifts thus provide some sense of the overall pace of change. The Euro-American population of the entire Ohio portion of the Black Swamp region had been no more than about 400 prior to the War of 1812, but that number increased steadily. By 1830, there were nearly 3,000 white inhabitants in Northwest Ohio. Meanwhile, Indian population figures saw the inverse—from an

[75] Treaty of Fort Meigs, *American State Papers, Class II, Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, 131-135.

estimated 3,000 residents in 1812 to just a small handful after deportation commenced in the late 1830s.[76]

The violence, theft, ecological changes, and hegemonic power of American law shifted the fortunes of both Indigenous communities and opportunistic settlers. A land transfer between the Odawas of Roche de Boeuf (present-day Waterville, Ohio) and John E. Hunt and Robert Forsyth illustrate the larger trends of the period. At the signing of the Treaty of Maumee in February 1833, the Odawas requested that Hunt and Forsyth be present. The two men arrived with Odawa leaders before George B. Porte, the Indian commissioner and governor of Michigan Territory. Before consenting to sign, one of the chiefs told the governor, "'Here are two of our friends who have fed us when we were too poor to buy provisions, and who have furnished us with powder and lead in the fall for our winter's hunt, it is true by this treaty we have made their books clean by payment of their accounts against our people (about $20,000) but we are going towards the Seting [sic] Sun, and we want to make (each of) them a present of three hundred and twenty acres of land.'" Hunt explains that the chiefs refused to sign until the governor agreed to these terms.[77] The Odawas' mounting debts to Hunt and Forsyth's dry goods store had apparently played some role in encouraging them to sell their remaining Maumee lands. Nevertheless, the Odawas viewed Hunt and Forsyth's willingness to extend credit as a sign of friendship. In return, they rewarded the men with several hundred acres of riparian land.[78] Now in possession of all remaining territory on the lower Maumee, the federal government and the

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[76] Martin R. Kaatz, "The Black Swamp: A Study in Historical Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 45, no.1 (1955): 1-35.

[77] Hunt, *Memoirs*, 67.

[78] For the treaty text including the land bequests to Hunt and Forsyth, see Treaty with the Ottawa, 1833 in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 2 (Treaties) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 392-393.

upstart speculators, Hunt and Forsyth, began selling the newly organized land to settlers. As for the Odawas, after signing the treaty they were eventually deported west of the Mississippi in two waves, the first in 1837 and the second in 1839.

By 1843, the Wyandots of the upper Sandusky River became the last large Native community to leave Ohio. For several decades, the Black Swamp had sustained Indigenous peoples and offered a modicum of shelter and protection from the growing threat of colonialism. Now, however, Ohio Indians began a new chapter, far away from the dark swamp forests, rushing rivers, and abundant game of the Maumee and Sandusky valleys. For the first time since forming thousands of years ago, the Black Swamp ecosystem was vulnerable.

CHAPTER VI:
CONCLUSION

The Black Swamp was not a wilderness. For most of the landscape's history, humans lived at its edges and depended on it to provide habitat and refuge for species of plants and animals that could be used to nourish and clothe people. This study contends that we miss something important about Indigenous history and the history of Euro-American colonialism if we ignore this fact.

Native peoples of the southern Lake Erie basin lived at the edges of a vast wetland, and that ecosystem was part of a domesticated country. But to see this, we must abandon or at least significantly modify our understanding of domestication. The concept need not refer to the confinement and control of organisms. Rather, domestication might best be understood as a cluster of practices that enable one entity to lay claim to the energies of another in order to construct an ecological (or socioecological) niche. Indigenous societies altered their landscapes in deliberate ways, and they transmuted the energies they claimed into material wealth, community care, military might, and political power.

And yet, time and again we are inclined to think of the Black Swamp and places like it as untamed wilderness. If we consider the danger and unpredictability of a landscape buzzing with malaria-carrying mosquitoes, prowled by wolves, and dotted with morasses so extensive and deep that early white settlers could drive a wagon no farther than one mile per day, then we can easily envision the wetland as a wild place.[1] Writing about the Black Swamp for the Ohio Historical Society in the late 1980s, English professor Carolyn Platt mused, "The Great Black Swamp is today little more than the dark ghost of a bygone habitat…. How can we balance

[1] For a popular account of the Black Swamp "wilderness," see Joseph A. Arpad, "The Story of the Great Black Swamp," WBGU, PBS, 1982.

wanting wilderness—beautiful, compelling, but often hostile to us—with our need for security, comfort, and human prosperity? Few of us today would want to live in the Great Black Swamp's shadow, but its memory and the sparse remnants that remain enrich our increasingly tamed landscape."[2]

It is not difficult to understand such tensions. Our recognition of the ecological importance and beauty of marshes, wet prairies, and damp hardwood forests does not negate our legitimate concerns about malaria or West Nile Virus. But Platt ultimately gets the analysis wrong. She imagines a world divided temporally and geographically between the wild and the tame, between nature and culture, and, implicitly, between savagery and civilization. We can cite perhaps three ways of thinking about the Black Swamp and its historical inhabitants that rejects Platt's (and many others') assumed historical teleology. First, we can historicize the concept of wilderness itself, showing an accretion of meanings over time and uncovering the sociopolitical contexts in which those meanings developed. My study does not pursue this line of thinking, though many environmental historians have approached critiques of the idea of wilderness from precisely this angle.

Environmental historian William Cronon has offered one such notable critique. Wilderness, Cronon argues, is a cultural artifact as much as a material reality. He explains that "[a]s late as the eighteenth century, the most common usage of the word 'wilderness' in the English language referred to landscapes that generally carried adjectives far different from the ones they attract today. To be a wilderness then was to be 'deserted,' 'savage," 'desolate,' 'barren'—in short, a 'waste,' the word's nearest synonym. Its connotations were anything but positive, and the emotion one was most likely to feel in its presence was 'bewilderment' or

[2] Carolyn V. Platt, "The Great Black Swamp," *Timeline* 4, no. 1 (February/March 1987), 35.

terror."[3] The crucible of industrial capitalism shifted those meanings as many white Americans reassessed the importance and intrinsic value of supposedly wild lands. It was a move away from defining wilderness as the embodiment of danger to a more sympathetic, but no less troubling understanding of wilderness as the midwife of a kind of individual purity. The conservation and wilderness preservation movements that took root between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries culminated in the creation of an important regulatory apparatus to protect particular ecosystems in the United States. One part of this emerging apparatus was the 1964 Wilderness Act, which defined wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."[4] It is in this context that Platt understands the supposedly dual nature of the Black Swamp as a beautiful and important, yet dangerous environment. Cronon largely rejects both the older and newer definitions of wilderness. "Calling a place home inevitably means that we will use the nature we find in it, for there can be no escape from manipulating and working and even killing some parts of nature to make our home," he writes. "But if we acknowledge the autonomy and otherness of the things and creatures around us—an autonomy our culture has taught us to label with the word "wild"—then we will at least think carefully about the uses to which we put them, and even ask if we should use them at all."[5] Here Cronon highlights our entanglement with places like the Black Swamp. This and other wetland environs are never truly separate from us, he would argue. At the same time, he also acknowledges that nonhuman nature is vibrant, alive, and at least partially independent of human designs.

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[3] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 70.

[4] The Wilderness Act, Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136), 88th Congress, Second Session, September 3, 1964, section 2c.

[5] Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness," 89.

A second way of critiquing the notion that a hostile wilderness has been replaced by a more secure, tamed landscape is to reject the binary itself. By closely attending to material relationships, I have tried to make sense of how Indigenous peoples enacted tame (i.e., domesticated) landscapes. This study rejects ethnocentric definitions of domestication and examines a history of land occupancy and political power focused on the Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Country. In my estimation, the Black Swamp was not a foreboding wasteland, but a useful ecosystem to be utilized in ways incommensurate with European forms of plant and animal husbandry, sedentism, private property, and sovereignty. Yet, my study also reveals that at times the Black Swamp and other parts of the Ohio Country were the dangerous wildernesses that white colonists imagined. The Iroquois Wars depopulated the Ohio Valley and Lake Erie basin, and the landscape became a dangerous charnel house visited only by war parties and hunters. Later, when settler raids drove Delawares, Shawnees, and Moravian Indians from their Ohio Valley homes, the migrations took these Ohio peoples away from an increasingly wild and unpredictable country toward the domesticated landscape of the Black Swamp where Wyandots, Miamis, and Odawas lived more securely. When malaria, smallpox, and the Northwest Indian War turned the wetland region itself into a dangerous, complex battleground, the domesticated landscape briefly became a wilder place. When the 1817 Treaty of Fort Meigs dissolved the Black Swamp Indian reserve, most of the landscape briefly became an unpredictable wilderness as Native peoples found themselves unable to manage the vast landscape that they had once called home. And when algae blooms poison Toledo's drinking water, disproportionately affecting poor people and people of color, the lake and the urban infrastructure become wild and dangerous hybrid assemblages. As the ethnographer Deborah Bird Rose has explained, "Wild

people (colonizers) make wild country (degraded and failing)."[6] In short, extractivist impulses and pretentions to mastery tend to produce instability and unpredictability. Wilderness is a condition that waxes and wanes depending on historical power dynamics shaped by warfare, colonialism, industrial capitalism, and technoscience.

Moreover, those domesticated landscapes created through practices of confinement and control can never be contained within the domus (the home, the farmstead, the nation-state). The effects of domestication always spill out into other, putatively separate, spaces. If we consider that Northwest Ohio farms of the post-Indian removal period required the destruction of portions of the Black Swamp forest and the displacement of the deer, beavers, wolves, and other critters that previously resided there, then we begin to get a sense of how this spillover works. Domesticated landscapes rooted in the confinement and control of nonhuman others, produce cascading ecological effects. According to anthropologist Heather Ann Swanson, domestication is fundamentally "a process of disorientation."[7] Conventional forms of domestication produce wilderness.

Finally, we might critique the teleological narrative of wilderness giving way to tamed landscapes by looking at the political work done by the wild-tame/savage-civilized/nature-culture binaries. If "Domesticating the Country" is chiefly a study about how a seeming wilderness was in fact a domesticated landscape—albeit one that does not conform to common understandings of domestication—then a second and nearly as important theme of the project is

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[6] Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), 4.

[7] Heather Ann Swanson, "Domestication Gone Wild: Pacific Salmon and the Disruption of the Domus," in *Domestication Gone Wild: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, ed. Heather Ann Swanson, Marianne Elisabeth Lien, and Gro B. Ween (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 152-153.

how these binaries come to be sedimented in the universalizing claims of modern jurisprudence and in the colonial project itself.

Settler violence, treaties, Christian missionary efforts, material infrastructures, and historical narratives of the "pioneer era" written in the late nineteenth century all worked in tandem to produce the appearance of a world divided between the wilderness occupied by Indians and the domesticated countryside of Euro-American farmsteads that emerged after the region had been conquered. In examples that I detail in chapters 3 and 5, European claims of authority depended on the production of a legal division between sovereignty and property (or law and land or people and things). Nevertheless, in practice the binary fell apart. The United States only achieved sovereignty by transforming material environments. American settlers and soldiers and surveyors altered the land and peoples' relationships to the land. But rather than treat the binary as a false one, we might follow political theorist Timothy Mitchell and a host of scholars of science, technology, and society (STS) to understand the binary as both a technical assemblage and a tool of colonial practice. The sovereignty-property binary eventually made its way into treaties in which Indigenous peoples were compelled to acknowledge the United States' right of preemption and the sovereign authority of the new nation, even as they maintained control over their land.

At the same time, property as a legal category could not contain the obligations and meanings conveyed in Native American conceptualizations of their relationship to the landscape, and so treaties ultimately erected another binary. This binary evacuated treaty negotiations of any sense that the land was inhabited by living spirits or that nonhuman things helped to constitute social relations. Thanks to the earlier work of Europeans and the warfare and landscape changes of the eighteenth century, the United States drafted treaties entirely on Euro-American terms.

Over and over, treaties reproduced a hard division between nonhuman nature and human culture, between matter and meaning.

Today, we live with the consequences of a world that appears divided in this way. Even as we are forced to acknowledge the persistent entanglement of nature and society, we struggle to find ways to bring nonhuman entities into politics in meaningful ways. The Lake Erie Bill of Rights, dead for the moment, offered one way to amend our politics and to begin to assemble our common world according to due process—that is, with passionate attention to the material conditions that make possible our very lives.[8] The uncomplicated, uncritical concept of wilderness (or nature for that matter) that has informed popular American history narratives fails to attend to material relationships and must be understood as the power-laden colonialist concept that it is.

The peculiar optics of colonialism that my study begins to outline have, of course, continued to this day. Indigenous peoples, often considered a part of the Ohio Country's past, are still very much tied to their Ohio homelands. In just the past few years, the Shawnee nation has purchased 58 acres of unceded land stolen by the state of Ohio in the 1840s, and the Wyandots have been deeded a small parcel of land near Upper Sandusky that was held in trust by the United Methodist Church for nearly a century and a half.[9] In the context of global climate change, COVID-19, and profound political and economic uncertainty in rural America, the

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[8] On due process material politics, and the rejection of "nature" as a useful concept, see Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso, 2011).

[9] Kevin Williams, "'Open the land': The Shawnee aim for a return to Ohio," *Aljazeera America*, February 19, 2016, http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2016/2/19/shawnee-come-back-ohio.html (accessed July 12, 2020); Nicky Gorny, "Wyandotte Nation reclaims 3 acres of church-held land," *Toledo Blade*, September 20, 2019, https://www.toledoblade.com/news/religion/2019/09/20/a-matter-of-trust-wyandotte-nation-reclaims-three-acres-of-church-held-land/stories/20190921006 (accessed July 12, 2020).

Shawnees and Wyandots are returning to landscapes that are wilder and less stable than the Black Swamp villages they were removed from in the 1830s and 1840s.

The domesticated country of eighteenth-century Black Swamp inhabitants no longer exists. It was long ago replaced by systems of agro-industrial production rooted in the systematic confinement, control, and simplification of ecosystems. In order to ensure a future for our children and grandchildren and our nonhuman kin, we must commit to preserving or rehabilitating important multispecies assemblages like the vast wetland that nourished and protected generations of Indigenous peoples during the violent upheavals of settler colonialism. Whether or not we can truly commit to reevaluating our relationships and commitments remains to be seen.

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