

DOCUMENT SET 3

Varieties of Interaction: The Consequences of Cross-Cultural Contact in the New World

Chapter 2's central theme involves the explosive effect of the encounter between Old World and New World cultures that took place in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century America. In many respects, the Native American cultures described in Chapter 1 were disrupted by European incursions during the first century of interaction. It is equally true that an enormously significant biologic, economic, and intellectual exchange was the result of this clash of cultures. It is your task to use the documents as the basis for an assessment of this interaction and its ramifications for the future.

For many years scholars have dwelt on the undeniable brutality of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean, which gave rise to the "Black Legend" with regard to Spain's role in sixteenth-century America. In fact, you should be aware of the legend's origins in the ideological struggle between Catholic Spain and Protestant Europe, especially England. The result of this battle was a flood of anti-Spanish propaganda that emphasized the alleged inhumanity of the *conquistadores* who claimed large areas of the Americas and their resources for Spain. Use the textbook account of the conquest, the religious background of the debate, and the criticisms of Spanish policies to shape your own interpretation of the Black Legend and its importance as part of the larger story of cross-cultural relations. As you review the writings of the clerical critics, including Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bernardino de Sahagún, compare them with the accounts of Spain's Florida missions by

Father Juan Rogel and some of the English chroniclers of American exploration. Try to arrive at your own judgment of the motivations and activities of the Spanish in the Caribbean basin.

As you examine the evidence, you also should be aware of the multiplicity of white-Indian contacts that were taking place throughout the Americas. Search the documents for indications of the diverse motives, values, and assumptions of the Europeans who entered into a variety of working relationships with Native American peoples in widely scattered regions of North and South America. Think about the forces which drew together the parties to this encounter as well as the conflicts that separated them. Try to view these contacts from the viewpoints of both Europeans and Indians as you attempt to formulate a broader generalization about the character of white-Indian relations than that implied by the Black Legend.

Your analysis also should probe the reasons for the adverse reaction to Spanish behavior in sixteenth-century America. Study the documents, including the visual representations of cross-cultural contacts, with an eye to the assumptions of the writers and artists who created the documents. Consider the impact of religious, political, and economic factors on the accounts of the New World that circulated in Europe. As you review the evidence, try to understand how these images of America and its indigenous inhabitants influenced future settlement and the development of cross-cultural relationships as the European presence became stronger.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the meaning of the "Black Legend," and how did it originate? According to Las Casas, how did the Spanish treat Native Americans? To what extent are his accounts trustworthy? How do they compare with the report of Father Juan Rogel's efforts in Florida? What was the "typical" Spanish experience in America before 1600? Explain any discrepancies that may appear in the many accounts of Spanish activity in the New World.
2. To what extent did first contacts and relationships between the English and the Indians differ from those which prevailed in Mexico and the Caribbean basin at the time of the Spanish conquest? How would you account for these differences?
3. How accurate are these accounts of white-Indian relations as assessments of the military, economic, and religious developments that occurred in the Americas between 1492 and 1650? Why are some accounts more reliable than others? Explain.
4. Examine the artistic renditions of sixteenth-century encounters between Europeans and Indians. What can be learned from these illustrations concerning

the assumptions of both European and Native American artists with regard to the "other"? What does the work of European artists such as Theodor de Bry reveal about the values and assumptions of those who portrayed the Spanish conquest? How did these visual documents influence European expectations and ideas about the peoples of the New World?

5. What do the documents reveal about the Indians' reactions to their earliest contacts with Europeans? Why did Native Americans respond as they did? What were the results of their behavior for their own and future generations of Indians?
6. To what extent were religious considerations the driving force behind European penetration of the Americas in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries? How do you assess the depth of religious commitment and its significance as a priority for the Europeans who initiated contacts with the Indian population?

1. Bartolomé de Las Casas Indicts the *Conquistadores*, 1542

God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful, and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate and desire of revenge, as any in the world.

They are likewise the most delicate people, weak and of feeble constitution, and less than any other can they bear fatigue, and they very easily die of whatsoever infirmity; so much so, that not even the sons of our Princes and of nobles, brought up in royal and gentle life, are more delicate than they; although there are among them such as are of the peasant class. They are also a very poor people, who of worldly goods possess little, nor wish to possess: and they are therefore neither proud, nor ambitious, nor avaricious. . . .

Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tigers, and lions which had been starving for many days, and since forty years they have done nothing else; nor do they otherwise at the present day, than outrage, slay, afflict, torment, and destroy them with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of. . . .

Of the Island of Hispaniola

The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practise strange cruelty among them. They penetrated into the country

and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as though they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold.

They made bets as to who would slit a man in two, or cut off his head at one blow: or they opened up his bowels. They tore the babes from their mothers' breast by the feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks. Others they seized by the shoulders and threw into the rivers, laughing and joking, and when they fell into the water they exclaimed: "boil body of so and so!" They spit the bodies of other babes, together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords.

They made a gallows just high enough for the feet to nearly touch the ground, and by thirteens, in honour and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, they put wood underneath and, with fire, they burned the Indians alive.

They wrapped the bodies of others entirely in dry straw, binding them in it and setting fire to it; and so they burned them. They cut off the hands of all they wished to take alive, made them carry them fastened on to them, and said: "Go and carry letters": that is; take the news to those who have fled to the mountains.

They generally killed the lords and nobles in the following way. They made wooden gridirons of stakes, bound them upon them, and made a slow fire beneath: thus the victims gave up the spirit by degrees, emitting cries of despair in their torture. . . .

Of New Spain

New Spain [Mexico] was discovered in the year 1517. And the discoverers gave serious offence to the Indians in that discovery, and committed several homicides. In the year 1518 men calling themselves Christians went there to ravage and to kill; although they say that they go to populate. And from the said

year 1518, till the present day (and we are in 1542) all the iniquity, all the injustice, all the violence and tyranny that the Christians have practised in the Indies have reached the limit and overflowed: because they have entirely lost all fear of God and the King, they have forgotten themselves as well. . . .

2. The Aztec View of the Conquest, ca. Sixteenth Century

. . . Then [Cortés] said to Moctezuma: "Is this not thou? Art thou not he? Art thou Moctezuma?"

Moctezuma replied: "Indeed yes; I am he." . . .

And when Moctezuma's address which he directed to the Marquis [Cortés] was ended, Marina [Malinche, a native woman working for the Spanish] then interpreted it, she translated it to him. And when the Marquis had heard Moctezuma's words, he spoke to Marina; he spoke to them in a barbarous tongue; he said in his barbarous tongue:

"Let Moctezuma put his heart at ease; let him not be frightened. We love him much. Now our hearts are indeed satisfied, for we know him, we hear him. For a long time we have wished to see him, to look upon his face. And this we have seen. Already we have come to his home in Mexico. At his leisure he will hear our words."

Thereupon [the Spaniards] grasped [Moctezuma] by the hand. Already they went leading him by it. They caressed him with their hands to make their love known to him. . . .

And when they had gone to arrive in the palace, when they had gone to enter it, at once they firmly seized Moctezuma. They continually kept him closely under observation; they never let him from their sight. With him was Itzquauhtzin. But the others just came forth [unimpeded].

And when this had come to pass, then each of the guns shot off. As if in confusion there was going off to one side, there was scattering from one's sight, a jumping in all directions. It was as if one had lost one's breath; it was as if for the time there was stupefaction, as if one were affected by mushrooms, as if something unknown were shown one. Fear prevailed. It was as if everyone had swallowed his heart. Even before it had grown dark, there was terror, there was astonishment, there was apprehension, there was a stunning of the people. . . .

And when [the Spaniards] were well settled, they thereupon inquired of Moctezuma as to all the

city's treasure—the devices, the shields. Much did they importune him; with great zeal they sought gold. And Moctezuma thereupon went leading the Spaniards. They went surrounding him, scattered about him; he went among them, he went in their lead; they went each holding him, each grasping him. And when they reached the storehouse, a place called Teocalco, thereupon were brought forth all the brilliant things; the quetzal feather head fan, the devices, the shields, the golden discs, the devils' necklaces, the golden nose crescents, the golden leg bands, the golden arm bands, the golden forehead bands.

Thereupon was detached the gold which was on the shields and which was on all the devices. And as all the gold was detached, at once they ignited, set fire to, applied fire to all the various precious things [which remained]. They all burned. And the gold the Spaniards formed into separate bars. . . .

And four days after they had been hurled from the [pyramid] temple, [the Spaniards] came to cast away [the bodies of] Moctezuma and Itzquauhtzin, who had died, at the water's edge at a place called Teoloc. For at that place there was the image of a turtle carved of stone; the stone had an appearance like that of a turtle.

And when they were seen, when they were known to be Moctezuma and Itzquauhtzin, then they quickly took up Moctezuma in their arms. They carried him there to a place called Copulco. Thereupon they placed him on a pile of wood; thereupon they kindled it, they set fire to it. Thereupon the fire crackled, seeming to flare up, to send up many tongues of flame; many tongues of flame, many sprigs of flame seemed to arise. And Moctezuma's body seemed to lie sizzling, and it smelled foul as it burned. . . .

And everywhere on the roads the Spaniards robbed the people. They sought gold. They despised the green stone, the precious feathers, and the

turquoise. [The gold] was everywhere in the bosoms, in the skirts of the poor women. And as for us who were men: it was everywhere in their breech clouts, in their mouths.

And [the Spaniards] seized, they selected the women—the pretty ones, those whose bodies were yellow: the yellow [light-skinned] ones. And some women, when they were to be taken from the people, muddied their faces, and clothed themselves in old clothing, put rags on themselves as a shift. It was all only rags that they put on themselves.

And also some were selected from among us men—those who were strong, those soon grown to manhood, and those of whom later as young men they would make messengers, who would be their messengers, those known as *tamacazque*. Of some they then burned [branded] the cheeks; of some they painted the cheeks; of some they painted the lips.

And when the shields were laid down, when we fell, it was in the year count Three House; and in the day count it was One Serpent. . . .

3. A Jesuit Description of the Missionary Alternative to Violence, 1570

From Father Juan Rogel To Pedro Menendez

Havana, December 9, 1570

. . . 1. I would have wished to write Your Lordship much better news than that which I have to write you concerning that for which Your Lordship works with such holy zeal; but it seems that the Lord in his mysterious judgement permits that neither the wishes, the work, nor the large allowance paid by Your Lordship, nor our industry are enough. . . .

2. In setting up the house on Santa Elena, Father Vice-Provincial then ordered me to go to live in Orista, where I went with much delight, with the wish and the great expectations that I had that we ought to begin to reap some harvest. And at first when I dealt with those Indians, they seemed to me to have improved very much, seeing them clothed and with a much better way of life than those of Carlos [Father Rogel's first mission in La Florida]. I praised God, seeing each Indian, married to one woman only, understanding how to work his land and take care of his house and raise his children very carefully. Seeing them not contaminated with the generally accepted abominable sins, and not incestuous, not cruel, not thieves; seeing them dealing with one another with much truth and much peace and simplicity.

3. Finally, it seemed to me that we were sure of our catch, and that it would take me longer to learn their language in order to explain to them the mysteries of our holy faith, than it would take them to receive it and become Christians. And thus I, together with the other three in my company, hastened to learn it, with such luck that in six months I spoke to them and preached to them in it. . . . But I saw

that instead of improving, they were getting worse, making fun of that which was told them. . . .

4. And since they had left, I made a journey, going to other chieftainships asking whether they would like to receive me, giving them my word and promising them, if they really wanted to be Christians. Because if they did not wish to be Christians, I was determined to return to Spain. And if they wished to be Christians, I would go where they were, to live among them and teach them the law of God. But there was none who answered me. . . .

7. Your Lordship sees here the course I have followed and the way I have dealt with the Indians and the meager results and the little readiness that I see in them for their conversion if God, our Lord, does not miraculously provide for it. The chief cause for this is that they scatter and are without any residential base for nine months out of the twelve each year. That even if, when they move from one place to another, they would stay together, there would be some hope, by going with them, of making some impression, hammering upon them like a constant drip of water on a hard rock. But each one goes his own way. And thus I have experienced the opposite of the principle Your Lordship feels so deeply about, that our faith must be spread in this land. What I find is quite the opposite, that in order to bear fruit among the blind and sad souls of this province, it is necessary, first to order how the Indians are to gather and live in villages and cultivate the land, gathering food for the whole year. And after they are thus very settled, enter the preaching. Because if this is not done, even if priests go among them for 50 years, their efforts will not be more fruitful than what we have achieved these four years that we have gone among them, which is nothing, not even hope