

14. DISCUSS WILLIAM CRONON'S CHANGES IN THE LAND, TAYLOR CHAPS. 8&9. (3/30/04)

New England colonization, economy, and ecology

We are not going to discuss Virginia and Chesapeake colonies much. Important to read Taylor. Had high death rate. Plantation economies.

New England settled in 17th century. We now call them "Puritans", "Pilgrims".

Taylor shows migration to New England both pulled and pushed.

Push factors: religious and social instability in England. Taylor good on this. Esp. in 1630s, seemed worth effort---give up possessions, feared ocean crossing---to emigrate to America. They saw that the poor in England screwed, were worried about sliding down into poverty, like middle class today.

English church diverse, full of conflict. Also many tensions expressed in religious idiom. Also pull of new possibilities: utopian impulses, hope to found ideal commonwealth, get new start.

Literate and very self-conscious, so well recorded, though Cronon shows limitations.

New England lightly populated when arrived, had been great epidemics even before 1620, gave first colonists breathing room.

So-called "Pilgrims" arrived in 1620. Massachusetts Bay colony, esp. 1630s, burst of immigration, mostly over by 1640s, so not a continual influx.

Taylor good on effects of climate, geography.

Because if cold, less disease, population much healthier than in South. Tremendous attrition in South. In New England on other hand, great population growth.

No possibility of plantation crops, which are an economic trap. Avoid boom and bust cycles, dependence on metropole. Instead mixed economy, small surpluses.

Nature of people who came over: "middling" Families rather than footloose individuals. Family farms, family labor.

Fewer indentured servants. Relatively egalitarian. Less individual debt, though debts to companies that backed.

What effects of religion on economy? Thesis of Max Weber, so-called Protestant Ethic. Said Protestant traits encouraged economy, esp. industry, thrift, orientation to this world. Controversies over Weber's thesis.

Relatively unified population. Diversity: cod fishermen not Puritans. Then ship-building, commerce.

New England economy not complete in itself: always tied to West Indies.

New England most like home economy of England, so complicated relationship, not always appreciate at home.

Cronon Discussion

What kinds of sources are available for environmental history? What according to Cronon, are the problems with such sources? What are the sources of bias? What does the assumption of balance or equilibrium do?

What might Cronon's biases be? How is he a product of his time? Talk about controversies over Chicago book, anger at perceived anti-development, anti-industry bias.

What are the problems with extrapolating back from the present? Example of Locust trees on Cape Cod, wiped out by hurricane, assume had always been there, actually only from 1920s. Forested New England, also not typical of past. Much more spruce, less hardwood on Maine coast than before. Historical films in England before era of enclosure.

But present can be good point of departure: Man who canoes Alewife Brook, now under highway and T-station. Book on Bullough's Pond in Newton (see supplementary reading list)

What were the factors that most shaped and limited the Indian economy? Winter food scarcity. heavy need for wood for fires. frost line, above which agriculture impossible. availability of fish.

Also, Indian subsistence was OK only for small population sizes. Slash and burn works fine as long as small population, but with larger population can be destructive.

Archaeologists think Indians overstrained resources with centralized chiefdoms and states.

Cronon doesn't seem to realize that corn agriculture not very old in New England, only 400 years before then.

Why so little property among Indians?

How did the Puritans moralize economic questions? How did they depict the Indian economy in moral terms?:

-gender: seemed as if men did all the work. Irony of highly sexist societies like Puritans, tightly circumscribed their women but criticized colonized people for mistreating women. Frequent theme in colonialism.

-men hunters, Puritans very sensitive on subject because of class issues with hunting in England. Also reinforced association of hunting with male laziness.

-storing was prime virtue: Indians didn't seem to do it. Couldn't see that seasonal change and movement functional equivalent of storing. Attitude like Jesuits. Transfer of stereotypes about European lower classes to Indians.

-bounding, fencing. Simply could not recognize Indian plots as farms. Cronon doesn't emphasize it, but slash and burn plots are extremely messy, random, easy to misinterpret. (Digression on Patricia Seed's argument about fencing as a ceremony of possession, like requirement for Spanish.)

-fixity versus mobility. Not staying in one place was what gypsies and vagrants did. So Indians no good.

-underused resources, didn't fully domesticate, reduce. Turns up later as justification for development.

What is the significance of judgements of poverty and richness? What were the positions of Locke, Morton?

How were the Indians hooked into the wider economy? What is Cronon's position on how and why the Indians began using white tools? His position is arguable: steel tools

are better, do increase productivity, one of first things that native peoples want around the world. Cronon on Indians being manipulated into trade, they actually fought hard to get into it. His bias.

Why did Indian money become so important to both sides? How, according to Taylor, did it end up forming part of a protection racket?

If the Puritans were most concerned with getting by or making a living, how did they get tied so thoroughly to Europe and the World Capitalist market? Why does Cronon put so much emphasis on commodities?

Effects of Puritan economy on landscape.

What were effects of livestock? Drastic effects elsewhere, desertification of Middle East. Of firewood needs? Discuss conflicts over parson's firewood allotment in Salem Village crisis.

of no longer burning?

What were the competing English ideas about land as property? How did cultural factors on both sides affect understandings of land and property? How could the Indians end up selling land more than once?