TO LIVE UPON HOPE

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Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast

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To my daughter, Sylvia, my parents,
John and Margaret Wheeler,
and the memory of my grandparents,
Leonard and Cornelia Wheeler

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Portions of chapters 12 and 13 are drawn, in revised form, from my article, "Hendrick Aupaumut: Christian-Mahican Prophet," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 187–220. Reprinted by permission of the

University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 7 contains revised portions of my article, "Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 13 (2003): 27–67. Reprinted by permission of the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture and the University of California Press.

In my academic wanderings from New Haven to Portland to Indianapolis, I've accumulated many friends who have enriched my life by making sure I didn't spend too much time in the eighteenth century, and for that I am grateful. I also thank my family for listening when I needed to talk and distracting me when I needed to be distracted. And most of all I thank them for providing a center to my life that always tugs me back. My mother and my grandfather, both lawyers, taught me a love of words and a good debate. From my sister, my father, and my grandmother, good Yankees that they are, I learned the value of *doing*.

TO LIVE UPON HOPE

Chapter One

Introduction

Indian *and* Christian

In April 1803, the Stockbridge Mohican[1] chief sachem, Hendrick Aupaumut, delivered a speech to a community of refugee Delaware Indians that had recently settled along the White River in Indiana Territory. Aupaumut recounted for the gathered Delawares how the Mohicans had been introduced to Christianity nearly seventy years earlier. In 1734, the Muhheakunnuk (as they called themselves) received word that Massachusetts officials were eager to send a minister of the gospel. Two hundred tribesmen gathered to debate whether to accept the offer. Although some voiced objections, the result of the council, reported Aupaumut, "was this: not to reject the offer before they should *try it*." It was thus decided that there should be a test village where the gospel would be preached "and let every man and woman go to hear it and embrace it if they think best." Mohicans from various villages began to gather to listen to the minister, but others were suspicious of Christianity, and these, according to Aupaumut, came under the influence of "some wicked Dutch people" and "ardent spirits." Those who did not join the mission community eventually drifted away, some to "live among other nations" and the rest to be "buried under the earth." Consequently, their villages "are, as it were desolated, and possessed by the whites." The test village—a Housatonic Mohican village later incorporated as the town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts—was the only village to survive, "and the descendants of that, who embrace the civilization and Christian religion, are now still remaining as a nation."

Aupaumut believed the Mohican experiment with Christianity and English "civilization" was the key to their survival as a people, so he recommended the same course to the Delaware. If they followed the Mohican example, the Delaware would become "a wise people," happy "indeed in this life and the life to come," and they would be able to "hold your lands to the latest generation, for this is the will of the great and good Spirit." But if the Muhheakunnuk offer to introduce Christianity and civilization were rejected, if the Delaware chose instead to "embrace the cup of the evil minded," then Aupaumut predicted that "you will become poor, in every respect, and you will be scattered; your villages will be desolated or possessed by a people, who will cultivate your lands." And finally, warned Aupaumut, "you will become extinct from the earth."[2]

Aupaumut's address raises a number of difficult questions. Had Christianity and "civilization" really served the Stockbridge Mohicans—or other Indian peoples—so well? Professing Christianity had rarely served to secure Indian lands. By the 1780s, nearly all of the Stockbridge Mohicans' original lands had been deeded into white hands, and the community had relocated to Oneida lands in New York, in a pattern familiar to the many eastern Indians pushed westward ahead of white settlement or pushed to the margins of white society.[3] On the issue of Mohican survival, however, Aupaumut's argument was hard to dispute: the Stockbridges were the only Mohicans to survive as an independent community. They were not, however, the only Mohican community to embrace Christianity.

Interpreting for Aupaumut that day was another Christian Mohican named Joshua. Joshua had been born in a village just thirty miles from Stockbridge and baptized as a boy in the 1740s by Moravian missionaries. He had married the daughter of a Delaware chief, and now he lived among the Delaware on the White River in Indiana.[4] Joshua's parents had been among the first American Indians to be baptized by members of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren, as the Moravians were officially known. The Moravians were one of the many evangelical groups to flourish in the first half of the eighteenth century as part of a transatlantic Protestant awakening.[5] Joshua and his fellow villagers, despite their profession of Christianity and their facility in the skills of European civilization (Joshua, for instance, was a cooper and carpenter as well as a musician and interpreter), had not fared well. Forced from their native village of Shekomeko (in what is now Dutchess County, New York) in 1746, Joshua's community had already moved at least five times by the time the Stockbridge Mohicans left their Massachusetts home in the 1780s. The community professed pacifism, but rather than securing a safe neutrality, their pacifism invited suspicion and violence, especially from anti-British Delaware and Shawnee Indians as well as angry mobs of colonists. At the time of Aupaumut's address to the

Delaware in 1803, Joshua was among the few remaining Moravian Mohicans, all of whom now lived in Delaware settlements.[6]

Viewed historically, it seems that Aupaumut was right—the embrace of Christianity, or at least Anglo-Protestant Christianity helped ensure Mohican community survival. But he was also wrong. Aupaumut's hopes that following the Christian path and adopting English civilization would secure Indian lands were never fulfilled in his lifetime. The Stockbridge Mohicans won some degree of protection through their embrace of Christianity and "civilization"—since 1856 the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans has lived on secured reservation land in Shawano County, Wisconsin—but Aupaumut and others had had to confront the realization that, in the end, most whites could not look past skin color and accept Stockbridges as fellow Christians and Americans.[7]

This book explores the histories of the Mohican communities to which Joshua and Aupaumut belonged—Shekomeko and Stockbridge—and their encounters with Christianity from roughly 1730 to 1760, years of tremendous upheaval and change in colonial American society. Major transformations were underway in the realms of demographics, economics, politics, and religion for both European colonists and America's native peoples, though these changes weighed quite differently whether one was white or Indian. If one had to choose one word to summarize the transformations of the early eighteenth century, it would be *diversification*. The populations of the colonies were becoming increasingly diverse, and with the flow of people came an expansion of the economic and religious markets. As colonialists and Indians encountered a greater diversity of people and goods (both physical and spiritual), they were also confronted with the important task of defining their identity.[8] More goods were traded than ever before, and the goods and raw materials traded traveled greater distances. Fish caught off North American coasts found their way to British markets; sugar cane raised by African slaves in the West Indies became rum that made its way to the colonies, often playing a crucial role in diplomatic and land transactions—often of dubious morality and legality—between colonists and Indians; and colonists consumed an ever-increasing variety of British manufactured goods and East Indian tea and spices with great enthusiasm. Indians too were drawn into this complex world market, selling skins and furs in exchange for a wide range of trade goods from rifles to cookware, from cloth to alcohol.[9] The increasing scarcity of land in established English settlements combined with a booming population invariably stoked demand for Indian lands. In the emerging speculative land market, those with the capital to invest reaped fortunes.[10]

Even in New England, the most homogeneous of the colonial regions, there were growing numbers of non-English residents. The middle colonies

were far more diverse. Dutch, English, German, Irish, and Scotch-Irish could all be found in New York. In all colonies, in varying percentages, there were Africans who lived as slaves, as freemen, and as indentured servants. Even though entire Indian communities had been ravaged by disease or relocated in response to the pressures of colonial settlement, Indians were still very much a presence in the colonies. Some lived in independent communities, some had intermarried with free black populations, and others lived among their European neighbors, often working in white households or making a living by trading mats, brooms, and baskets. And those Indians who had relocated, whether by choice or by force, often lived in refugee communities with substantial tribal diversity.[11] The Mohicans of the Housatonic Valley and Shekomeko faced similar challenges, in slightly different forms, due to the differing colonial contexts of their locations, Massachusetts and New York, respectively. The founding of the Congregational and Moravian missions (in 1734 and 1740) set the two communities on very different paths. The acceptance of missionaries signaled that Mohicans were struggling to make sense of a world that was rapidly changing around them.

Native choices were constrained by the realities of colonialism, yet Indian agency was not entirely a fiction. Nor was the embrace of Christianity purely instrumentalist—a move calculated to curry favor with their increasingly powerful European neighbors. So the question is not simply what Mohicans hoped to gain by admitting missionaries to their villages, but what Congregational and Moravian Christianity became as practiced by the Mohicans of Stockbridge and Shekomeko. Comparing the experiences of Mohicans at Stockbridge and Shekomeko helps to restore Indian agency to the historical narrative by showing the very different choices two communities made. And comparing the two mission projects makes plain the extent to which political forces shaped the development of distinctive mission practices among Anglo-Protestants and Moravians. Studying Stockbridge and Shekomeko side by side reminds us once again that Christianity is always inculturated; its expression always reflects the historical, social, and cultural context of its practitioners, whether German Moravians, English Congregationalists, or Mohicans.[12]

Understanding the distinctive forms of Congregational and Moravian Christianity and the ways they intersected with broader structures of colonial culture and political power is crucial to understanding the mission experience at Stockbridge and Shekomeko. To an alien observer, Congregationalists and Moravians would likely have been perceived as practicing two entirely distinct religions. Studying the New England mission alongside the Moravian mission serves to make the Puritans strange once again, especially helpful because scholarship on the Congregationalism of New

England Puritans and their descendents has long dominated the field of early American history.

By the 1730s, Congregationalism had been the established religion of Massachusetts for a century, but the close association of religious and civic authority was beginning to crack. The drive of first-generation Puritans for religious freedom had involved no suspicion of merging secular and religious powers; rather, ministers and civic leaders yearned to erect a society in which the state supported and was supported by the *right* form of Christianity, free of the Catholic corruptions they believed still lurked within the Church of England. The Puritans had arrived in what they saw as an "empty" land, free of preexisting European civic authority. Thus, in constructing a "Bible commonwealth," church membership conferred civic status. But in subsequent generations, the Puritan vision of the gathered church of visible saints became increasingly problematic, as fewer and fewer New Englanders took the step of professing their converted state before the congregation to gain full membership. The perceived decline of piety was often interpreted by many New England divines as inviting God's judgment on a sinful nation.

A century after the "Great Migration," New England still bore the heavy stamp of Puritanism, and most New Englanders were Congregationalists. But one could also find Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, and even growing numbers of Anglicans. The debates over religion sparked by increasing diversity were in fact debates over the relationship of national, cultural, and religious identities. The transatlantic Protestant evangelical awakening that had begun to brew in the early eighteenth century burst forth in revivals in New Jersey in the 1720s and swept through New England in the 1730s and 1740s. Revivalists from Jonathan Edwards to George Whitfield to James Davenport soon split both Presbyterians and Congregationalists into pro- and anti-revivalist factions. Ironically, just as revivalists were beginning to challenge older theological ideas of social integration—ones that located the individual in concentric covenants between the individual, the church, and the nation with God—the mission efforts spurred in part by those same revivals were insisting that true Christianity was evidenced not only by the state of one's heart but also by one's mastery of the arts of English civilization.[13] Defenders of a more sober religious expression accused revivalists of threatening the social order with their itinerancy and their "enthusiastic" preaching methods. But even evangelicals like Gilbert Tennent sounded a remarkably conservative note when confronted with the Moravians and their successes among the Indians, suggesting that Anglo-Protestantism, whether pro- or anti-revivalist, was heavily invested in religion as a mechanism of preserving social order and, increasingly, racial boundaries.

New England colonists no longer viewed England as the moral wilderness their Puritan ancestors had. Rather, there emerged an increasing sense of a "Protestant interest" that went hand in hand with Britishness. Anglo-Protestant mission efforts like the Stockbridge mission reflected this convergence. There, Indians were to be schooled in the ways of English civilization. But as the history of Stockbridge suggests, New Englanders remained profoundly ambivalent about the prospect of welcoming Christian Indians into the fold. Even as the Stockbridges acquired markers of English civilization such as literacy and English-style houses and served loyally in battle alongside New England colonists, they were consistently denied the same privileges as their white peers. This story is not unique, but it reflects a broader movement, among both whites and Indians, toward increasingly racialized identities.

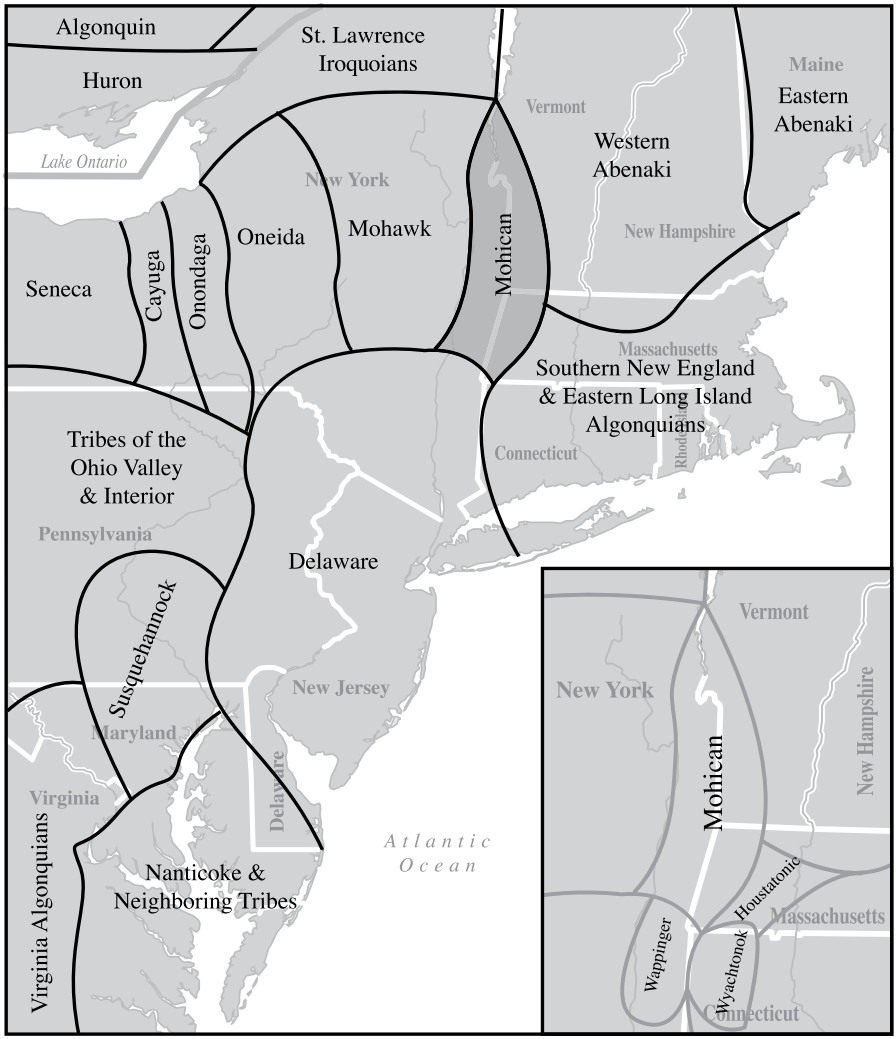
Moravian Christianity could scarcely have been more different from New England Congregationalism. Whereas Puritanism was very much a religion of the Word—placing tremendous importance on literacy as the means to gain access to God's revealed truths—Moravians emphasized the saving power of Jesus's blood. Through a rich course of rituals, including baptism, communion, songs, and prayer, the power of the blood could be accessed and directed toward the particular needs of the sinner. Moravians themselves were a fairly diverse lot including many different nationalities, social classes, and occupations among the early immigrants to America. And because they had always been a religious minority with considerable internal diversity, Moravians generally shied away from associating particular cultural traits with the Christian life. This tendency was further reinforced in the colonies, where they were a religious and ethnic minority. These disparate expressions of the Christian story translated into dramatically different mission programs.

A comparison of the founding and development of the two missions challenges easy assumptions about the relationships between missionaries and Indians. While Mohican choices were constrained, both communities chose to adopt and adapt Christianity for reasons rooted in native tradition and their current circumstances. Like their European neighbors, Indians too faced an increasing array of religious options. And as in colonial society, greater diversity brought greater divisiveness as individuals, families, and communities sought to construct religious identities that fit the new worlds created by European presence. Some Indians continued quietly to practice the ways of their ancestors. Others, concluding that their acceptance of European ways was the reason for their straitened circumstances, joined nativist revitalization movements, such as that led by the Delaware prophet in the 1740s.[14] Still others, like the Stockbridge and Shekomeko Mohicans, turned to Christianity, often as a means of both preserving community and tapping new spiritual resources.

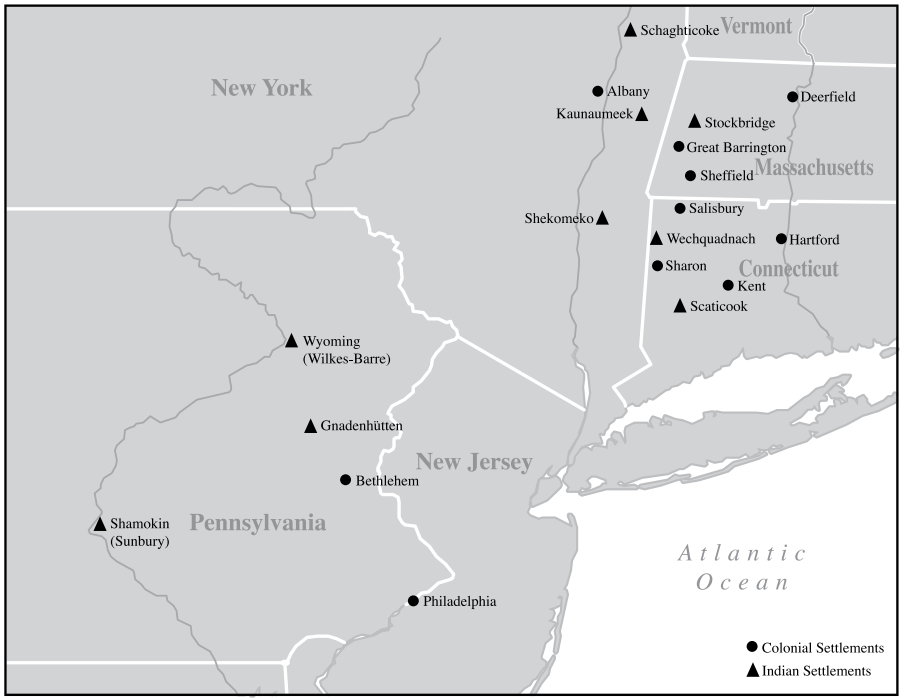
The power of the European trade, pathogens, and weaponry all worked to constrain Indians options, but adaptation of Christianity did not mean unquestioning capitulation to European colonial aims or embrace of missionary cultural norms. Briefly stated, the Stockbridge Mohicans strove to preserve what they identified as a core value, or at least a core function: Mohicans as cultural intermediaries. In native society, individual identity was defined relationally, and much the same could be said of corporate identity, which was articulated and negotiated in the language of fictive kinship. The Housatonic Mohicans of Stockbridge sought to preserve, or rather re-establish, their position as the "front door" between their fictive kin on either side of their Hudson River homelands—their Delaware Grandfathers, their Shawnee "Younger Brothers," their Iroquois "Cousins," and the increasingly powerful New England "Fathers." The Stockbridge strategy would be to preserve a degree of communal autonomy by becoming fluent in the culture of their powerful New England neighbors. Instruction in English religion, literacy, and husbandry was a means of binding the English to the Mohicans, a relationship they hoped to trade on with their western Indian relations. For the Stockbridge Mohicans, preservation of communal identity did not mean perpetuation of inherited subsistence or unchanged ritual practices but rested instead on the continuation of longstanding diplomatic strategies.

The residents of Shekomeko and the surrounding villages who eventually accepted Moravian missionaries made a different calculation, but one that also attempted to maintain a continuity with the past. Many Shekomeko residents had had considerable experience with other missionaries and wanted no part of the sort of Christianity they had encountered. They only accepted Moravian missionaries once the Brethren had proved that they differed dramatically from other Europeans. These Shekomekoans would seek to enlist the blood of Jesus as a new, powerful *manitou*—the spirits or "other-than-human" beings who animated the world—whose spiritual power could be put to use in traditional (and traditionally gendered) ways. Men sought help on the hunt, for example, while women hoped Christian practice could help to create and sustain self, family, and community. Confronted with the increasing challenges of colonialism, these men and women enlisted the service of an imported European spirit in the project of maintaining and supporting inherited Mohican values. Destructive spirits, like the alcohol and pathogens Europeans brought, would require a European-derived spiritual antidote, in this case the blood of a powerful warrior, Jesus. The Mohicans of Stockbridge and Shekomeko understood their adaptation of Christianity as a means of preserving important elements of what defined them as a people.[15]

Viewed up close, the Shekomeko story could scarcely be more different from the Stockbridge story, but in the end, it serves to confirm many



Map 1 Map of Tribal Territories, adapted from *Handbook of North American Indians,* ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 15, *Northeast,* ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), ix, 198. Created by Ryan Kruse.



Map 2 Indian and White Settlements in the Eighteenth Century. Created by Ryan Kruse.

of the lessons of Stockbridge. Paradoxically, Anglo-Protestants found the Moravian missionaries threatening both because they were generally more successful in winning converts and because they challenged the equation of Christianity with European culture, thereby threatening the line between "Indian" and "white" that British colonial society increasingly depended on as a support for its sense of identity. At the same time, the Moravian disinterest in culture demands attention. In important ways, the Moravians foreshadowed modern sensibilities in defining community as resting on bonds of affection and shared experience.

The emergent mission communities at Stockbridge and Shekomeko were profoundly shaped by forces of politics, economics, religious diversification, and war. The stories of Stockbridge and Shekomeko put a face on these abstract forces, while illuminating the diversity of Indian Christianity and revealing the extent to which debates over the revivals engaged important issues of race and national identity.

This book is part of a growing body of scholarship that builds on the important advances of ethnohistorical scholarship begun in the 1970s while also questioning the tendency of these revisionist accounts to cast the meeting of Indian and white as an inevitable clash of cultures. The driving interest of these revisionist historians and literary scholars was in resistance to Euro-American hegemony.[16] Nativist revitalization movements received considerable scholarly attention, while Indian Christianity received relatively little. When native Christianity was considered, it was usually—with some important exceptions—depicted as a disingenuous mechanism of covert resistance or a course of last resort.[17] Anthropologists and textual critics working in colonial discourse and postcolonial studies have also tended to interpret native Christianity as either a case of colonization of consciousness or masked resistance.[18]

More recently, scholarship on the "Indians' new world" has challenged the earlier "clash of cultures" model of colonial Indian history, providing keen insights into the social and economic lives of northeastern Indian peoples while shying away from studies of religious belief and practice.[19] Uncovering the texture of Indian peoples' religious lives poses significant challenges, but a new generation of scholars has been attempting just such an undertaking, using a variety of methodologies. These scholars have explored the ways various Indian communities have engaged Christianity in a dialogue with native traditions as a means of preserving native identity and securing new spiritual resources with which to confront the challenges of colonialism. Douglas Winiarski, using the tools developed by students of "folk" and "lived" religion in his study of New England's Old Colony, has unearthed a "shadowy world" in which Indians and English settlers exchanged religious beliefs and practices. David Silverman has demonstrated how Christianity was incorporated by the Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard, facilitating relations with their white neighbors and enabling the preservation of community. And Jane Merritt was among the first to tap into the rich Moravian sources, exploring the ways that Delaware Indians created a religious middle ground through their adaptation of Moravian-Christian practice.[20] Literary scholars have taken a different approach, focusing on the writings of Christian Indians, which had long been neglected because of the presumed taint of the missionaries' imperialist influence. Also in the literary studies vein, Laura Stevens has located missionary writings in a transatlantic context showing the ways that colonial identity rested in part on a particular construction of colonial missions, thus ably demonstrating that cultural encounter was not a one-way street.[21] But while missions have been receiving considerable attention, since James Axtell's monumental *The Invasion Within* there has been relatively little work focused on comparing mission contexts.[22]

This book continues the effort to unearth the diverse paths forged by Indians in early America striving to be both Indian and Christian. It explores the shape of Mohican identity as it adapted two distinctive forms of Christianity as well as the shape of Christianity as it was interpreted through the lens of Mohican tradition and Mohican experiences of colonialism. The proximity—in time and space—of the Congregational and Moravian missions to the Mohicans allows for the benefits of microhistorical studies while also introducing an important comparative element that facilitates examination of the broader historical context. The Moravian sources provide an opportunity to examine the experiences and religious beliefs and practices of Indian individuals in a way that is unthinkable when working from English colonial sources alone. The example of the Moravian missionaries calls our attention to the diversity of European Christianity and its relations with colonial powers. The Stockbridge story provides a window onto the construction of a new body politic that invoked both native tradition and Christianity. It also provides an opportunity to examine how English colonial identity became increasingly dependent on constructions of racial difference.

Before we move on to those stories, the organization of the book needs some explanation, as it does not follow the standard path of a monograph. The form arises from the peculiar challenges of the available sources. What had seemed to me, as a graduate student years ago, a perfect opportunity for a comparative study—two Mohican Indian communities with two very different mission programs founded within five years of each other—proved instead to be immensely frustrating. The two bodies of sources stubbornly refused to answer the same questions, posing thorny organizational as well as interpretive challenges. These challenges forced me to think more deeply about the relationship between historical actors and the types of sources they produced as well as the relationship between the source material and the final form of historical writing. Rather than sweeping these questions under the rug, as I was often tempted to do, I have taken a cue from my sources and attempted to address these questions through style and organization as well as analysis.

In roughest outline, there are four parts to the book. Parts I and IV focus on the Stockbridge story, while parts II and III address the Moravian mission at Shekomeko. Treatment of the Moravian mission is thus sandwiched between the Stockbridge chapters. This organization reflects not only the chronology of the mission—the Stockbridge mission began earlier and continued beyond the existence of the Shekomeko mission—but it also fits with the story that emerges from the two missions. The Stockbridge mission stands as a case study in the larger history of colonization, with emphasis on the reconfiguration of peoples and the formation of racial identity.

The focus here remains on the public and the political, on the body politic. The Shekomeko story, by contrast, provides a rare glimpse into native peoples' subjective experiences of colonialism. The chapters devoted to the Shekomeko community are more like a detailed snapshot showing depth and detail but not change over time, while the Stockbridge chapters might best be compared to an Impressionist painting: from far away the image is of a sweeping landscape, but any effort to focus in on an area of detail leaves one looking at a patch of seemingly unconnected dots. Stylistically, the Stockbridge chapters are narrative and chronological, while the Shekomeko chapters might be said to be phenomenological, focusing on the experience and practice of religion under the circumstances of colonialism.

Within the broader structure, each part consists of a short biographical vignette focusing on two individuals, followed by one or two analytical chapters that take up the central issues raised by the narratives. The aim of the vignettes is to bring alive the historical actors as humans faced with real human dilemmas, rather than simply as data points. Of course, as historian Kenneth Greenberg has written, "those who reconstruct the past are grave robbers. Some treat the corpse with respect, while others mutilate it. Either way, we all rob graves."[23] My project is no different, but I hope that these vignettes help readers to appreciate the humanity of historical peoples whose literal and figurative graves have so often not been treated with respect.

Finally, a few words on methodology and the relationship between the sources and the final product presented here. The most obstinate problem of this project has been how to compare the mission communities at Stockbridge and Shekomeko when the sources available did not answer the same questions. This in turn prompted the question of why the missionaries created the kinds of sources they did. Why do the Stockbridge records contain so little on individual Indian lives, and how has this sparseness constrained the narrative options available to the historian? Similarly, why did the Moravians record the details they did about individual Mohican lives? And if comparison is so difficult, is it even appropriate to lump them together in one book? I have asked myself this question many times, and in the end the answer I settled on is that either story alone would be incomplete and deceptively simple. On its own, the arc of Stockbridge history leaves us with a sense of inevitability: the missionaries enter the scene as agents of colonial power with imperial aims, and before long, the Indians are dispossessed of their lands and seemingly their religion as well. For its part, the Shekomeko story is so short and the sources so different from all other colonial records that it is difficult to gain a broader perspective. Turning to the Moravian-Mohican story after an introduction to the Stockbridge mission allows for a greater appreciation and understanding of Indian experiences, something sorely

lacking in the Stockbridge sources. It also provides suggestive possibilities regarding the religious experiences of the mission residents. And returning to the Stockbridge story after the Shekomeko interlude helps us assess the larger meaning of the Moravian missions in the sweep of colonial Indian history.

Missionaries produced the sources at the heart of this project, yet ultimately my subject is neither the missionaries themselves nor the Indians who resided in mission communities but rather the processes of cultural interaction that took place at missions. Missionaries, to be sure, had their hopes and dreams of how native communities would be reborn as communities of Christ (which meant substantially different things to Congregationalists and Moravians), but the Mohicans of Stockbridge and Shekomeko had their own reasons for their alliances with the missionaries, which sometimes clashed and sometimes merged with missionary goals. As we'll see in the chapters that follow, Christianity as practiced by the Mohicans at Stockbridge and Shekomeko was not a monolithic entity. Both communities engaged Christianity in ways that helped them to chart a way forward in a dramatically changed world. What follows is an effort to humanize what has too often appeared in history books as a faceless "clash of cultures." This book attempts to bring to life the experiences of men and women, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, as they all attempted to negotiate a period of radical and often devastating social transformation.

These human encounters reveal moments of hope tinged by many more moments of disappointment. The title of the book is taken from a piece of paper used by Jonathan Edwards to sketch out his notes for a sermon to the Stockbridge Indians in October 1756, a time when life seemed precarious indeed. Britain and its allies were not faring well in the first years of the French and Indian War. Locally, in Stockbridge, the mission house had been fortified and now served as a garrison for hundreds of soldiers. Rumors swirled of an imminent attack by thousands of French troops, and a company of about thirty Stockbridge Indians had recently departed to the battlefront, including a man named Ebenezer Maunnauseet, who had served often as Edwards's interpreter. Always careful not to waste paper, Edwards wrote his sermon on the back of a piece of paper that had already seen use by Maunnauseet for handwriting practice. Eleven times over—perhaps just before he set out with the militia for an expedition at Lake George—Maunnauseet had written the line, "He who lives upon Hope may dy of Disappointment" and carefully signed his name. The line is apparently a rendering of one of Benjamin Franklin's proverbs from *Poor Richard's Almanac:* "He who lives upon hope will die fasting."[24] Whether the improvisation was Maunnauseet's or someone else's, it seems a fitting commentary on the mission experience.

PART I

HOPE

Chapter Two

The River God and the Lieutenant

On April 25, 1724, in exchange for £460, three barrels of cider and thirty quarts of rum, Umpachenee, Konkapot, and nineteen other Housatonic-Mohican men conveyed a tract of land along the Housatonic River to John Stoddard and other members of the "settling committee" appointed by the Massachusetts government to purchase lands for the creation of two new townships.[1] This deed was not the first to convey Housatonic-Mohican lands into English hands, but it is significant because it records the first known meeting of the principal figures in the founding of the Stockbridge mission a decade later.[2] Beginning our story with this deed and a glimpse into the life circumstances of two signatories, Stoddard and Umpachenee, underscores the extent to which the story of the mission must also be a story of power—of earthly and spiritual power and the intertwining of the two. The deed raises a number of important questions: Why were the Housatonics willing to sell in 1724? And why, just ten years later, did some of the sellers consider the possibility of a Christian missionary on Mohican lands when they had resisted missionary efforts for a century?

Umpachenee and Stoddard lived their lives in vastly different worlds, but their common interest in the lands of the Housatonic Valley and the religious affairs of its inhabitants ensured that their paths crossed with some regularity. The two men must have come to know each other well over the decades as they came together to negotiate issues of primary importance to their

native communities. At the time of their first meeting in the 1720s, both men were prominent leaders in their local and regional communities. And both would be centrally involved in the negotiations leading to the founding of the Stockbridge mission. Umpachenee brought the concerns of his community to the attention of Massachusetts leaders; he sought assurances of fair dealing; and he maintained ties with other Indian peoples locally and farther afield. Stoddard served as the primary negotiator for the Massachusetts government; he heard the grievances of the Indian residents when they arose; and he was the one, with his surveyor's chain, who platted the newly incorporated Indian town of Stockbridge. Glimpsing these two men's lives and the state of their communities at the time of the 1724 deed provides the backstory to the official founding of the Massachusetts mission to the Housatonic-Mohicans a decade later.

The River God

Two facts go a long way in explaining the course of John Stoddard's life: He was the son of Solomon Stoddard, one of Massachusetts' most famed ministers, and he was present at the 1704 French and Indian attack on Deerfield, Massachusetts.[3] Given these two facts, it is not at all surprising that Stoddard devoted much of his career to strategizing the defense of New England's frontier and the conversion of Indian souls.

No dearth of sources impedes the reconstruction of John Stoddard's life. Indeed, much of the history of New England could be told through Stoddard's family tree, whose branches linked him to the vast network of "River Gods" that reigned over the Connecticut River Valley with near-feudal power. Ties of kinship coupled with provincial patronage placed Stoddard squarely at the center of judicial, military, and ministerial power in western Massachusetts.[4] A glimpse, then, at Stoddard's life and how it brought him to the signing of the 1724 deed is instructive in setting the scene for the founding of the Stockbridge mission.

Born in 1682, John Stoddard was the tenth child of Esther Warham Mather Stoddard and Solomon Stoddard, who was disparaged by his opponents as the "Pope" of western Massachusetts. In his role as pastor of the Northampton Church, Solomon Stoddard developed a unique version of the New England Way—a sort of Presbyterian revivalism distinct from the increasingly Anglophilic Congregationalism of coastal Massachusetts. Solomon Stoddard presided over numerous "seasons" of revival in his Northampton parish, the fruits of his evangelical preaching and distinctive (among Puritans, anyway) view of communion as a "converting ordinance" rather than the sole privilege of the visibly saved. Through force of personality and kinship ties, the senior Stoddard left his stamp on the religiosity of