

School of History and Cultures

Department of History

**Colonial Failure in the New World in the Sixteenth Century:
a French and German Comparison**

Stefan Lang



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Supervisor: Dr Margaret Small

Abstract

During the first half of the sixteenth century attempts were made by Europeans to colonise Venezuela and Canada, as the rush for land in the New World increased at pace. Yet these colonial attempts have largely been forgotten by history despite the legacies they left both for Europe and the American continent itself. There are two reasons why these ventures have been overlooked. Firstly, they were non-Iberian. Secondly, they both failed. The efforts of the Welser merchant-banking company to colonise Venezuela (1528-1556) and the French Crown to settle Canada (1541-1543) have been subordinated in the historical literature to the successful colonisation carried out by the Spanish and the Portuguese in the New World, which began at the end of the fifteenth century, and led to imperial empires. Indeed, the phenomenon of colonial failure as a whole has remained relatively unpopular amongst academics. Whilst some more “popular” failed colonies have been studied individually, there has been no comparative approach to determine the shared causes for failure amongst a number of unsuccessful enterprises during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This work shall look to produce such a comparative, using the Welser and French colonies as case studies, given their underrepresentation in the literature. It shall use the few available primary sources, as well as foreign-language studies, to give a detailed understanding of the factors that caused the colonies to fail. A lack of preparedness, a lust for riches amongst the colonists, and poor foreign relations shall be identified as the three main causes for failure, each of which could be applied to a greater or lesser extent to other failed colonies. These attempts at colonisation shaped the early settlement patterns in the New World, impacted upon the social and political structures of the native populace and led to considerable alteration of the natural environment. It is important that we increase our understanding of them.

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Introduction

In the 1530s and 1540s the Germans and the French, eager to reap some of the benefits of New World expansion which they perceived in the Portuguese and Spanish empires, established colonies in Venezuela and Canada respectively. The German colony was governed by representatives of the Welser merchant-banking house of Augsburg and lasted from 1528 to 1556; the French enterprise in Canada, building on earlier explorations in the region by Jacques Cartier, received the royal patronage of King Francois I, and existed between 1541 and 1543. Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese, who had a general paradigm of successful settlement in the New World, the Welser and French colonies failed to prosper. Historians have given great attention to the first Iberian colonies in the New World, given the empires that resulted from them and the obvious impacts they had on the American continent. Fewer scholarly works, however, have been specifically concerned with the phenomenon of colonial failure, which in some cases had a comparable legacy to the more successful ventures.

The most significant failed colonies during the sixteenth century were all non-Iberian enterprises. Some of these efforts, such as the French attempts to establish colonies in Brazil in the 1550s and Florida in the 1560s, have been well-studied on an individual level.¹ The “lost colony” of Roanoke, founded by the English in Virginia in 1585, has also been thoroughly examined by contemporary historians.² Other attempts, such as those examined here, have been largely

¹ For the Brazil colony see: F. Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World* (Boston, 1865); P. Gaffarel, *Histoire du Brésil Français au Seizième Siècle* (Paris, 1878); T.E. Smith, ‘Villegaignon: Founder and Destroyer of the First Huguenot Settlement in the New World’, *Papers of the American Society of Church History*, Volume 3 (1891) pp. 185-206; C.E. Nowell, ‘The French in Sixteenth-Century Brazil’, *The Americas* (1949) pp. 381-393; J. Whatley, ‘Food and the Limits of Civility: the Testimony of Jean de Lery’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Volume 15(4) (1984) pp. 387-400; J. Whatley, ‘Impression and Initiation: Jean de Lery’s Brazil Voyage’, *Modern Language Studies*, Volume 19(3) (1989) pp. 15-25; F. Lestringant & A. Blair, ‘Geneva and America in the Renaissance: the dream of a Huguenot refuge 1555-1600’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Volume 26(2) (1995) pp. 285-295; J.T. McGrath, ‘Polemic and History in French Brazil, 1555-1560’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Volume 27(2) (1996) pp. 385-397; F. Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage: L’Amérique et la Controverse Coloniale, en France, au Temps des Guerres de Religion* (Paris, 1999); J. Eriksson, ‘Travelling Savage Spaces : Jean de Lery and Territorialisations of “Antarctic France”, Brazil 1555-1560’ in K.G. Hammarlund (ed.), *Borders as Experience* (Halmstad, 2009) pp. 68-91.

For the Florida colonies see: H.P. Biggar, ‘Jean Ribault’s Discovery of Terra Florida’, *The English Historical Review*, Volume 32 (1917) pp. 253-270; M.A.F. Gorman, ‘Jean Ribault’s Colonies in Florida’, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Volume 44(1/2) pp. 51-66; C.E. Bennett, *Fort Caroline and its Leader* (Gainesville, 1976); L. Fishman, ‘Old World Images Encounter New World Reality: Rene Laudonniere and the Timucuans of Florida’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Volume 26(3) (1995) pp. 547-559; J.T. McGrath, *The French in Early Florida: in the eye of the hurricane* (Gainesville, 2000); C.E. Bennett, *Laudonniere & Fort Caroline: history and documents* (Tuscaloosa, 2001); F.A. Mann, *Florida Historical Tales: Story of the Huguenots; a Sixteenth Century Narrative* (Charleston, 2008).

² For example see: C.W. Porter, *Adventurers to a New World: the Roanoke Colony, 1585-87* (Washington, D.C., 1972); D. Stick, *Roanoke Island: the beginnings of English America* (Chapel Hill; London, 1983); K. O. Kupperman, *Roanoke, the abandoned colony* (Totowa, N.J., 1984); I. Noel Hume, *The Virginia Adventure:*

neglected by English-language academics. Moreover, no work has offered a comparative approach to investigate common causes for colonial failure.

This thesis shall look to take such a comparative approach by studying the Welser and French colonies, which whilst disparate in structure and location, offer similar explanations as to why they failed. Despite a dearth of literature on the two colonies, there is enough evidence to establish three overriding causes for failure, which could be applied to other New World colonies that did not survive: firstly, the lack of preparedness of the enterprises in regards to their geographical knowledge, provisioning and leadership; secondly, the lust for riches of the colonial leaders and settlers, in which speculative exploration was privileged over sustainable development; and finally, poor foreign relations with the Spaniards and natives in the New World, which gradually undermined colonial settlement.

Overview of Colonies

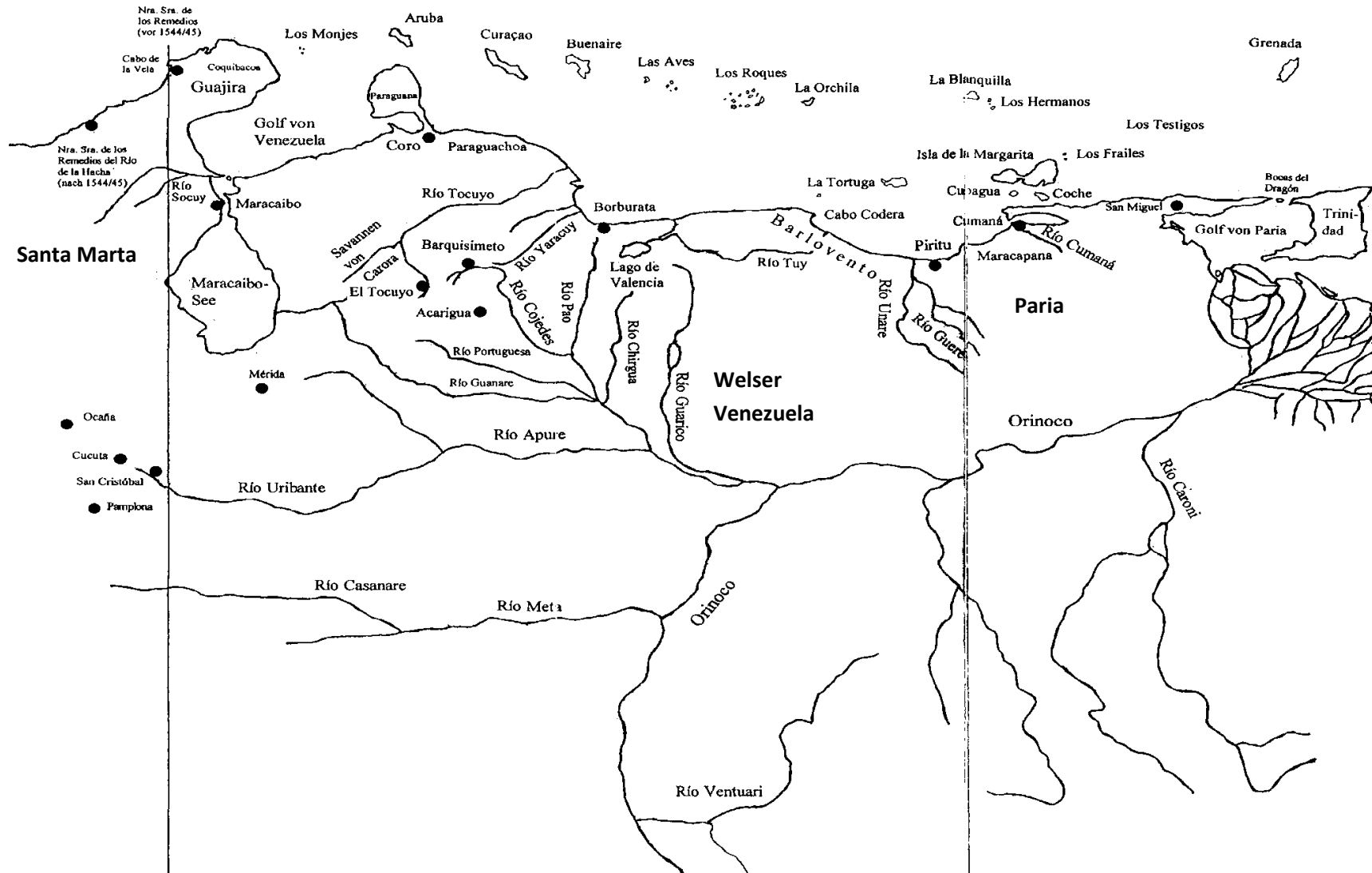
Welser Colony

On 27th March 1528 Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, granted a contract of privileges for the administration and exploitation of the province of Venezuela to Heinrich Ehinger and Hieronymus Sailer, two agents of the wealthy Welser merchant family from Augsburg, Germany. (Appendix 1 offers an historical background to the colonies in question, in the absence of substantive secondary literature). The Welser were to build two settlements of no fewer than three-hundred colonists within two years, provide fifty miners for Spanish territories in the Caribbean and pay the royal fifth (by contributing one-fifth of all income), to the Spanish Crown, which was required by all Spain's New World colonies.³ On 24th February 1529 Ambrose Alfinger arrived in the only existing Venezuelan town of Coro as the first Welser governor of the colony.⁴ (For biographies of the most important individuals involved in each colony, see Appendix 2)

Roanoke to James Towne: an archaeological and historical odyssey (Charlottesville, 1997); L. Miller, *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* (New York, 2001); A.T. Powell, *Grenville and the Lost Colony of Roanoke: the First English Colony of America* (Leicester, 2011).

³ K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903), p.162

⁴ Some debate exists over the name of Ambrose Alfinger. In some works, notably Haebler's, he is referred to as Ambrose Ehinger, with the suggestion that he was the brother of the contract holder, Heinrich. However, most Spanish chroniclers refer to him as Alfinger or Dalfinger (the area of his birth) and it is probable that the use of the name Ehinger resulted from errors in transcription and translation over many years. Juan Friede explores the problem of Alfinger's name. See: J. Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela* (Caracas; Madrid, 1961), pp. 166-8



Map 1: Territorial demarcations of Venezuela and its Neighbours c. 1550

Source: G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven* (Berlin, 2000), Appendix

Alfinger's tenure as governor was characterised by two brutal *entradas* (missions of exploration and conquest) to the west of Coro, as he attempted to find a sea passage to the Far East, whilst simultaneously searching for the rumoured gold of the interior. The first, conducted in 1529, resulted in the foundation of the settlement of Maracaibo. (See Map 2) The second, between 1531 and 1533, saw considerable plundering of native settlements, which ultimately led to Alfinger's death in the Chinacota Mountains, and accumulated little wealth.⁵ (Map 3) Simultaneously, Alfinger's deputy, Nikolaus Federmann, conducted an unauthorised southern mission from 1530 to 1531 in search of a "South Sea". His exploration would prove just as unsuccessful and profligate as Alfinger's. (Map 2)

Alfinger's successor, Georg Hohermuth von Speyer, continued the *entrada* policy on his arrival in 1535, soon heading on a monumental three-year exploration of the Venezuelan interior with four-hundred-and-ninety men, again for little reward.⁶ (Map 3) On his return to Coro he began planning a new mission but died in 1540, before it could become a reality. During Hohermuth's mission, Federmann conducted his second *entrada*, this time heading west. By late 1538 he had reached the province of Cundinamarca (later New Granada) at the same time as fellow conquistadores, Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada and Sebastian de Benalcazar.⁷ Ultimate jurisdiction for the rich province would be awarded to Santa Marta, the Spanish province neighbouring Venezuela, whose claim to the territory Quesada had staked.

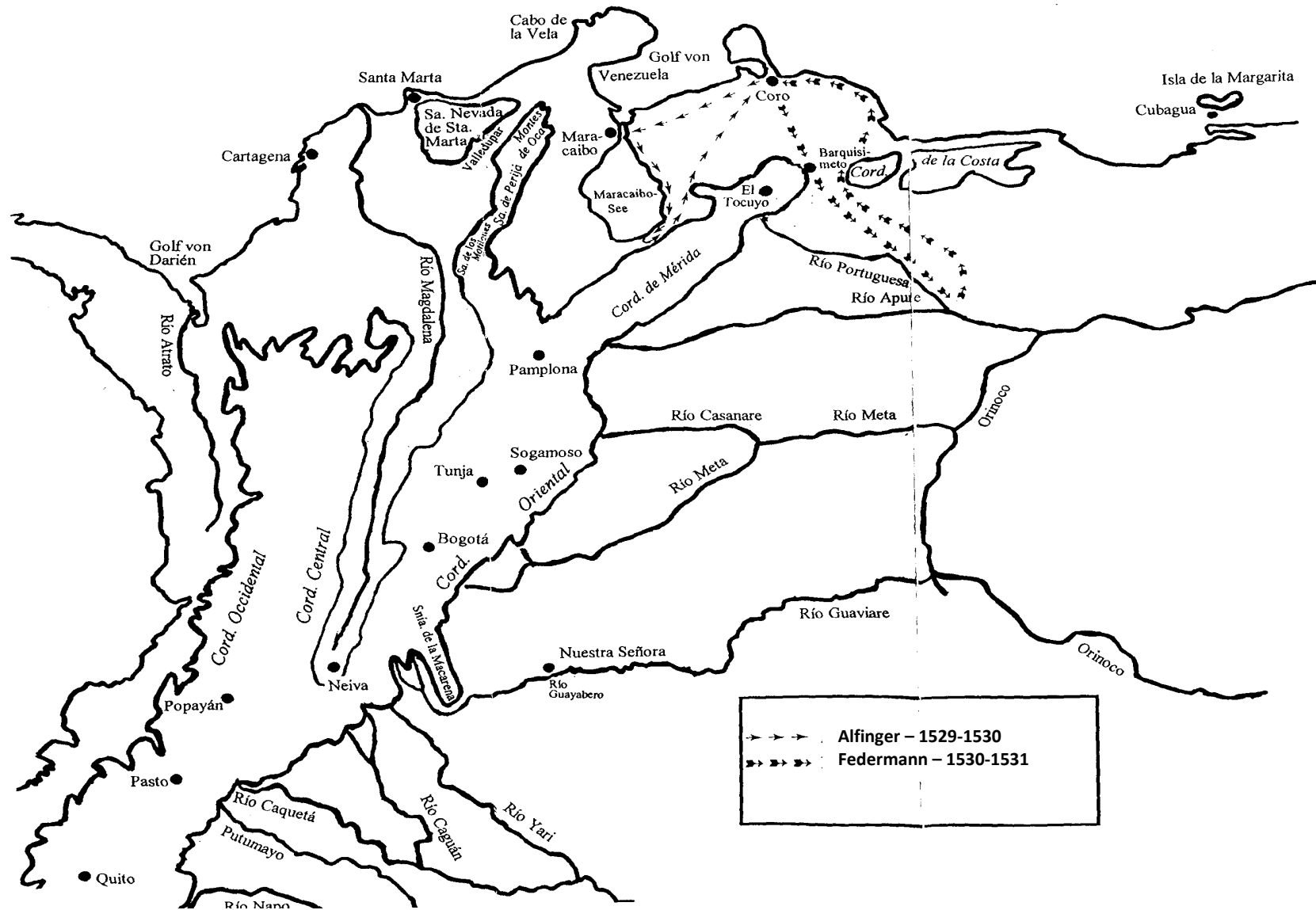
As the last German Captain-General of the province, Philipp von Hutten, prepared one final search for "El Dorado" in 1541, the Welser colony was coming under increasing scrutiny from Spanish royal officials because of its poor performance.⁸ Hutten's *entrada* would spend over four years in the wilderness of Venezuela for no reward. Furthermore, both Hutten and his deputy, Bartholomaeus Welser Jr., were murdered on their return in 1546 by a rogue Spanish soldier named Juan de Carvajal. Carvajal had been sent by the Licenciate Juan de Frias to begin *residencia*

⁵ G.F. Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, 1535-1541, 3 vols (Madrid, 1959), vol. 3, pp. 24-31; Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, pp. 208-9.

⁶ For Hohermuth's governorship and exploration see Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp 222-245; Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, 35-46

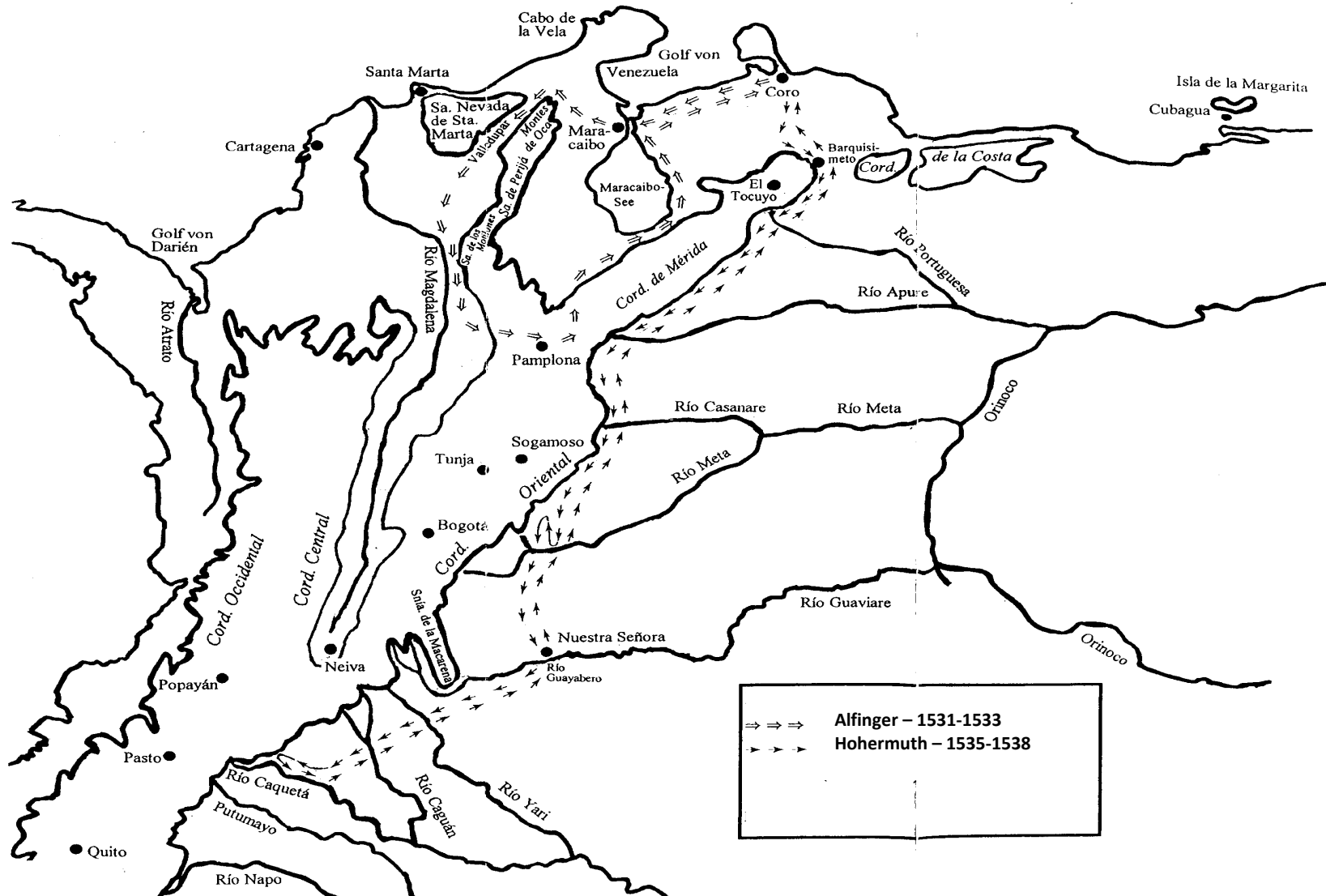
⁷ J.I. Avellaneda, 'The Men of Nikolaus Federmann: Conquerors of the New Kingdom of Granada', *The Americas*, Volume 43(4) (1987) pp. 385-6

⁸ Although Von Hutten was never officially appointed governor, interim governor Bishop Rodrigo de Bastidas appointed him Captain-General in 1540, with the understanding that he would assume the governorship at a later date.



Map 2: Ambrose Alfinger's and Nikolaus Federmann's First Entradas

Source: G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven* (Berlin, 2000), Appendix



Map 3: Ambrose Alfinger's Second *Entrada* and Georg Hohermuth's *Entrada*

Source: G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven* (Berlin, 2000), Appendix

proceedings against the Welser colony, but had used his position to usurp power in an attempt to remove Venezuela from German control.⁹

Although Carvajal was brought to justice, this was the effective end of the Welser colony in Venezuela. Legal disputes at the Council of the Indies in Madrid ensured the province remained under official Welser rule for a little longer, albeit under Spanish governors. However, their contract was finally revoked in 1556.¹⁰

French Colony

The French colony of 1541 developed from two earlier voyages of exploration of the St. Lawrence region in Canada by navigator Jacques Cartier. The first voyage, conducted in 1534 on the authority of King Francois I, resulted in the navigation and mapping of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in addition to trading with several native groups.¹¹ On the second voyage, during 1535-6, Cartier initially explored the St. Lawrence River as far as the native settlement of Stadacona (present-day Quebec). Here the French created a temporary fort to pass the Canadian winter. Despite opposition from the native Iroquoians of Stadacona, Cartier soon continued his exploration downriver to Hochelaga (Montreal) in search of the legendary Kingdom of Saguenay and a western route to the Far East.¹² Cartier's trip was unsuccessful, having been blocked from further advancement by the Lachine Rapids (See Map 4). With native relations deteriorating, the French returned home in the spring of 1536, after the ice had melted.¹³

Before the French had left Canada, Cartier captured the Chief of Stadacona, Donnacona.¹⁴ His tales of the riches of Saguenay would inspire a further French voyage to Canada, despite the limited findings so far. After war with the Habsburgs delayed Francois's plans, he finally

⁹ M.M. Lacas, 'A Sixteenth-Century German Colonizing Venture in Venezuela', *The Americas*, Volume 9(3) (1953) pp. 285-8

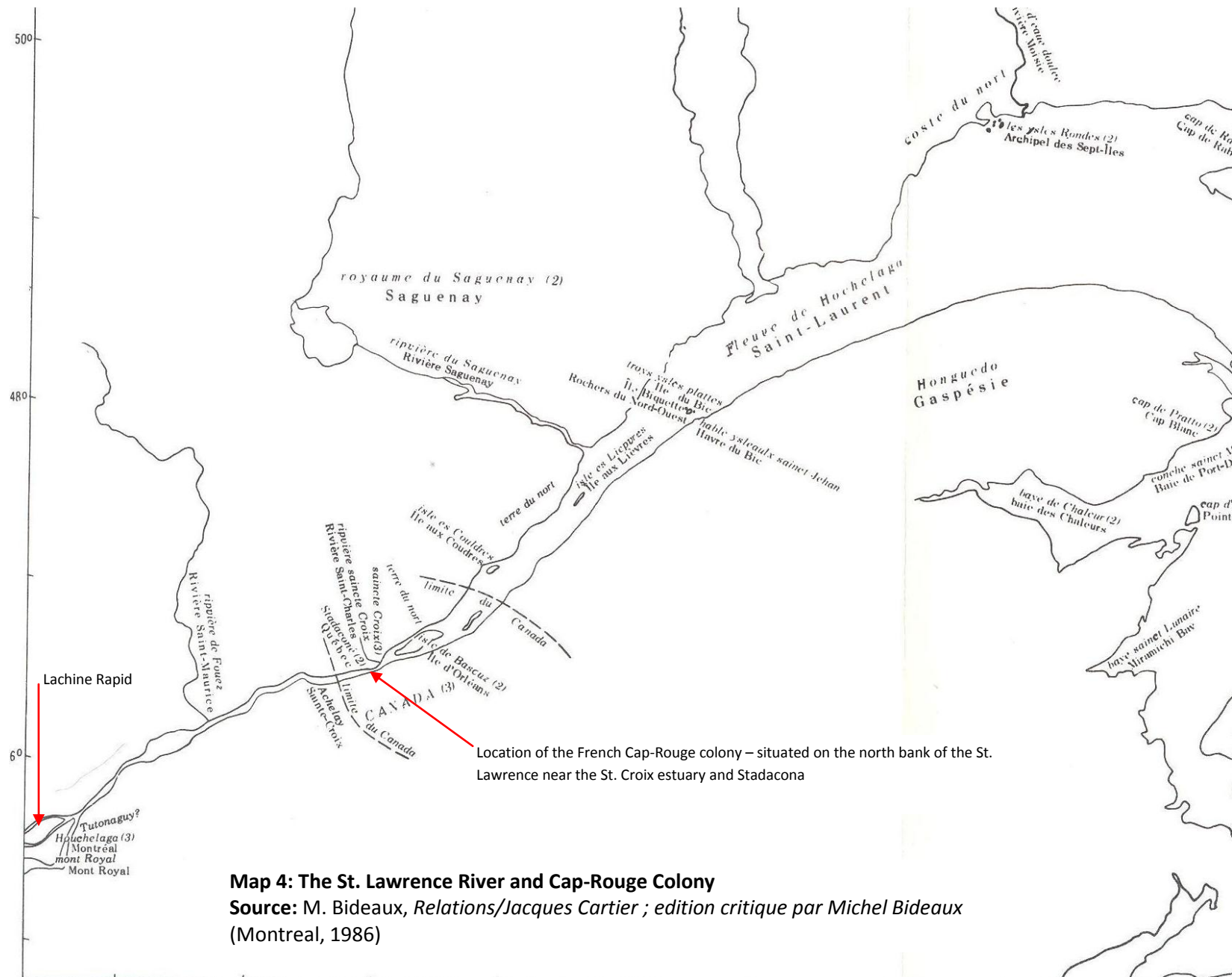
¹⁰ C.R. Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World: renaissance encounters with the strange and marvelous* (Charlottesville, 2008) p. 188

¹¹ For Cartier's account of the voyage see: J. Cartier, H.P. Biggar & R. Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Toronto; London; Buffalo, 1993) pp. 3-31

¹² M. Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations; édition critique par Michel Bideaux* (Montreal, 1986) p. 89

¹³ For Cartier's account of his second voyage see: J. Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-1536' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 35-89

¹⁴ Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-6', p. 84



commissioned a third voyage of discovery to Cartier in October 1540.¹⁵ However, this commission was soon revoked in favour of one of colonisation and evangelisation, granted to Protestant nobleman Jean-Francois de la Roque de Roberval on 15th January 1541.¹⁶ Cartier was retained as master-pilot and began preparations for his voyage.

Cartier left for Canada with five ships in May 1541, leading the first part of the colonial expedition, as Roberval remained in France to finish his preparations.¹⁷ On arrival, Cartier immediately began searching for Saguenay, whilst leaving a handful of men to complete the fortifications of his Charlesbourg-Royale colony, which had been established at Cap-Rouge, near Stadacona (Map 4).¹⁸ The exploration was unsuccessful, with the only “riches” attained by the mission proving to be mere fool’s gold and iron pyrites, not the “fine gold” and “diamants” Cartier had envisaged.¹⁹ The narrative of the mission cuts off shortly after Cartier’s return to the colony and all that is certainly known is that the French abandoned Charlesbourg-Royale around May 1542, having survived another Canadian winter.

Roberval had finally left La Rochelle in April 1542 and sailed to Newfoundland, where he encountered the returning Cartier. Despite being requested to return to Canada with Roberval, Cartier “stole privily away” at night for France, although not before informing his commander that the colonial failure was the result of the “Savages, which went about dayly to annoy him.”²⁰ Roberval continued to Cap-Rouge, where he ordered the construction of stronger fortifications, to be named France-Roy. Little is known of the short-lived colony, although the existing account describes the difficulties the French had in surviving the Canadian winter of 1542-3, as freezing weather, starvation and disease destroyed the morale of the colonists, despite Roberval’s attempts to instil discipline.²¹ On 5th June 1543 Roberval began his own attempt to pass the Lachine Rapids and head towards the supposed wonders of Saguenay. However, like Cartier, his attempt was futile and the narrative breaks off before his return to the settlement, where only thirty men had remained.²² Roberval returned to France in September 1543, bringing an end to French colonial ambitions in Canada for over half a century. (Appendix 3 provides a timeline of each colony)

¹⁵ ‘Cartier’s Commission for his Third Voyage’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 135-138

¹⁶ ‘Roberval’s Commission’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 144-151

¹⁷ M. Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*, trans. P. Claxton (Toronto, 1973) pp. 40-1

¹⁸ R. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, Volume XIII. America. Part II. (London, 1600) p. 152

¹⁹ J. Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Third Voyage, 1541’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. 101

²⁰ ‘Roberval’s Voyage 1542-3’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 108-9

²¹ F. Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World* (Boston, 1865) p. 206

²² J.L. Allen, ‘From Cabot to Cartier: The Early Exploration of Eastern North America, 1497-1543’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Volume 82(3) (1992) p. 517

Existing Literature and Sources

The body of historical writing concerning the two colonies in question remains very thin, with few comprehensive English-language studies of either. This is perhaps unsurprising given that there is a dearth of primary evidence relating to each endeavour.

Considering the Welser Colony was German-administered for at least eighteen years of its existence, there is a relative absence of original German-language sources pertaining to its history. The only such evidence that appears to have survived is the accounts of Nikolaus Federmann and Philipp von Hutten. Federmann's *Indianische Historia* (1557) is primarily a traveller's account of his first exploration of the Venezuelan interior between 1530 and 1531.²³ Whilst it includes little information regarding the colonial administration of the time, the account offers a detailed insight into the Welser colonists' first extensive contact with the natives of the region and suggests why future relations would become strained. Furthermore, it gives a vivid picture of the variable environment and terrain of sixteenth-century Venezuela, highlighting some of the difficulties of both exploring such a land and creating a sustainable settlement there. Von Hutten's account, "Newe Zeytung" (1785), is less cohesive than Federmann's, being merely a collation of some of his letters of correspondence with the Old World, together with a short narrative of his adventures under Georg Hohermuth.²⁴ Nevertheless, the letters give rise to a number of concerns Hutten had about the future of the colony, particularly in relation to its potential for survival, therefore giving a different perspective to Federmann. Whilst such accounts are useful to historians studying the Welser in Venezuela, they hardly offer an exhaustive narrative of the colony's history. Therefore, Spanish administrative documents must be consulted, as they are the only other primary sources relating to the colony. The Spanish became notorious for their extensive bureaucracy in the New World, with a multitude of legal documents, audits and reports concerning their colonies being transmitted back to the Council of the Indies in Madrid, where the performance of individual provinces was judged.²⁵ Although Venezuela was Welser-administered, it was still within overall Spanish jurisdiction and, consequently, royal officials filed reports to the Council about the progress of the colony. This has given contemporary historians a number of documents relating to the administrative and financial state of the Welser colony, housed in the General Archives in Seville. The majority of these documents have been published in Enrique Otte's (ed.) *Cedularios*, providing easy access to this detailed evidence, which cannot be obtained from elsewhere.

²³ First published in 1557, Federmann wrote his account in the 1530s, sometime before his death in 1542.

²⁴ Hutten's account and letters were first published in 1785, although they were written during the period described.

²⁵ J.L. Phelan, 'Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Volume 5(1) (1960) pp. 50-54

Primary evidence of the French colonisation effort at Cap-Rouge is as scarce as in the case of the Welser. Historians have relied on two incomplete accounts, supposedly by Jacques Cartier and someone on the Roberval expedition, to obtain some idea of how events unfolded in the colony. These English-language accounts come from an entry in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* from the end of the sixteenth century. These had been translated from the Italian of Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi* (1550), which had purportedly derived from original French manuscripts. Whilst the Cartier account describes the French arrival in Canada, the establishment of the settlement, and the attempt to reach Saguenay, it breaks off before any reason can be given for the abandonment of Charlesbourg-Royale in 1542. The same problem occurs with the account from the Roberval mission, which again ends abruptly before the French left Canada in 1543. As a result, the majority of contemporary histories of the French colonising mission are very brief indeed. Nevertheless, other primary documents can be used to offer a more comprehensive interpretation on why the French abandoned their Canadian colony. Firstly, there are the narratives of Cartier's first two voyages to Canada in 1534 and 1535-6 respectively. These are more detailed and extensive than the one of his third voyage and emphasise the environmental challenges of settling in Canada, as well as the deteriorating relations between the French and the natives, which impacted on the later colonising attempt. Secondly, H.P. Biggar has translated and collated *Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval* (1930) from before and after the Canadian failure. These documents highlight the problems faced by the French in preparing for the colonising mission, as well as offering reports from fishermen and foreign spies suggesting why the French left Canada. Thirdly, the *Cosmographie* (1904) of Jean Alfonse, Roberval's master pilot, offers a detailed description of the climatic conditions of Canada, although it gives little information directly related to the colony.²⁶ Finally, material sources based on recent archaeological excavations at Cap-Rouge give a new insight into the French settlements there, including the strength of fortifications, the diet of the colonists and trading relations with the native people. Whilst no extensive narrative exists relating to the French colony in Canada, historians have often overlooked the other scanty, yet potentially valuable, primary evidence available today, which this thesis shall look to exploit.

Other sources historians of the New World often make reference to are the great sixteenth-century chronicles of the early European colonies. Unfortunately, neither Welser-Venezuela nor the French in Canada feature heavily in these informative works. The Welser are at least included extensively in Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes' *La Historia General y Natural de las Indias* (1542) and Juan de Castellanos' *Elegias* (1588), which help establish the chronology of their administration of Venezuela, in the absence of any comprehensive first-hand account. Oviedo

²⁶ First published in 1904, it is likely that Alfonse wrote his *Cosmographie* during the 1540s.

typically constructed his history from testimonies of men who experienced the events in question, giving them a good weight of authority. Similarly, José de Oviedo y Baños' *Historia de la conquista y población de la provincia de Venezuela* (1723) embellishes Oviedo y Valdes' narrative through the use of later testimonies.²⁷

The less appealing prospect of Canada, coupled with a general lack of French writing on the New World, meant few histories relating to the Canadian colony materialised in the immediate aftermath of the venture. Andre Thevet's *Singularitez de la France Antarctique* (1557) and *Cosmographie Universelle* (1575), and Marc Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (1609) offering some additional detail to that included in Cartier's narratives. Meanwhile, early Anglophone works on the French in Canada, like Francis Parkman's *Pioneers of France in the New World* (1865) and Stephen Leacock's *Mariner of St Malo* (1914) fail to bring any significant new evidence to light regarding the colony, and their imperialist tone makes interpretations of native-French relations particularly unbalanced.

This failure of earlier historians to supplement the few existing primary sources on the French colony in Canada, has led to the reproduction of stale historical narratives relating to the venture. This has ensured that our understanding of the reasons for the colony's failure has not been sufficiently enhanced. There are some exceptions. Marcel Trudel's *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (1963) looks beyond the incomplete narratives to the historical background of the colony, as well as the potential impact of Cartier's earlier voyages on its failure.²⁸ Meanwhile, Olive Dickason, in *The Myth of the Savage* (1984) and Bruce Trigger in *Natives and Newcomers* (1986) make use of anthropological methodology to focus on the native element of the French colony, the relations between the two groups, and how the French misunderstood pre-contact native societies.²⁹ Whilst important interpretations, these works look at the French colony in isolation, without giving a comparative approach could offer a more comprehensive understanding.

A similar problem can be identified with more contemporary histories on the Welser Colony, which are sparse in any case. Konrad Haebler's *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (1903), Juan Friede's *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela* (1961), Götz

²⁷ The Welser feature to a lesser extent in the chronicles of A.de Herrera y Tordesillas, *Historia General de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Océano* (1611) and P. de Aguado, *Recopilación* (Bogotá, 1906)

²⁸ S.E. Morison gives an English-language study of the colony comparable to Trudel in, *The European Discovery of America: the Northern voyages A.D. 500-1600* (New York, 1971)

²⁹ Other such works by the authors that touch upon the Canadian colony are: O.P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: a history of founding peoples from earliest times* (Toronto, 1997); B.G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: a history of the Huron people to 1660* (Montreal, 1976) and Trigger, 'Trade and Tribal Warfare on the St. Lawrence in the Sixteenth Century', *Ethnohistory*, Volume 9(3) (1962) pp. 240-256

Simmer's *Gold und Sklaven* (2000) and Jörg Denzer's *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft in Sudamerika* (2005) offer extremely detailed studies of the colonising effort based on the existing archives.³⁰ However, there is no in-depth English-language study of the Welser and, indeed, any treatment of the colony is usually restricted to a couple of paragraphs in more general books about the history of Latin America. A partial exception is M.M. Lacas's article, 'A Sixteenth-Century German Colonizing Venture in Venezuela' (1953), which gives an overview of the colony, albeit relying solely on the narratives of the chroniclers.

Despite a paucity of primary sources, the underrepresentation of the Welser and French colonies in English academic literature is surprising, given the legacy they left. Consequently, a comparative approach could help to offer greater insight into the failure of individual colonies by suggesting causes not immediately obvious from the original archives.

³⁰ Less comprehensive German works on the Welser colony are E. Richter, *Die Welser Landen in Venezuela* (Leipzig, 1938) and E. Schmitt & G. Simmer, *Tod am Tocuyo: die Suche nach den Hintergründen der Ermordung Philipps von Hutten 1541-1550* (Berlin, 1999)

Chapter 1: Lack of Preparedness

Any attempt to found and maintain a New World colony in the sixteenth century required careful preparation. Whilst preparing to enter unknown territories with unknown people was far from straightforward, quickly adapting one's preparations on arrival was as important. However, the attempts by the Welser in Venezuela and the French in Canada demonstrate a notable lack of preparedness in terms of their geographical knowledge, colonist numbers, provisions, and leadership, which contributed to their failure.

Inadequate Geographical Knowledge

Harsh Climate

North-Western Venezuela, where the Welser settlements were established, had only been tentatively explored before 1530, mainly by Juan de Ampies and his detachment of Spanish soldiers, who had been sent to halt the slave trade on the Venezuelan coast and establish amiable relations with the natives.³¹ Despite having no active participation in the New World up to this point, the Germans were in a privileged position to gain knowledge of its early development as "its wealthy cities, new universities, and numerous elites supported the most exuberant publishing industry in Europe."³² Publications of Columbus, Vespucci, Cortes and others were readily available to the German elite, giving an indication of the geographical uniqueness of the New World and its inhabitants.³³ Although little was reported on Venezuela, the German colonists would at least have been aware of the need for acclimatisation on arrival. However, in reality this was extremely difficult. Firstly, Governor Ambrose Alfinger was too keen to begin exploring the interior for riches, taking most of the colonists with him. Secondly, some degree of climate sickness and disease amongst the settlers was unavoidable. The first New World settlers on Hispaniola had their numbers depleted between 1493 and 1496 as a result of hunger and disease, both linked to the climate. Indeed, after a generation of settlement the European population on the island was still less than four-thousand, such was the mortality rate.³⁴ This pattern would emerge throughout settlements

³¹ L.V. Dalton, *Venezuela* (New York; London, 1912) p. 71

³² Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World*, p. 2

³³ Indeed, Philipp von Hutten shows an intimate knowledge of the early publications on the New World, as he recounts its history up to his own time at the end of his first account. See P. Von Hutten, E. Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt: die papiere des Welser-Konquistadors und Generalkapitans von Venezuela, Philipp von Hutten 1534-1541* (Hildburghausen, 1996) pp. 81-95

³⁴ N.D. Cook, 'Sickness, Starvation, and Death in Early Hispaniola', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Volume 32(3) (2002) pp. 351, 374

across the New World in the sixteenth century, causing thousands of European deaths.³⁵ Nevertheless, the poor location of Coro and Maracaibo accentuated the problem in the Welser colony. The Coro area was exceptionally dry and hot with few water sources and little vegetation, increasing the chances of starvation.³⁶ Meanwhile, Maracaibo was located in a warm, damp area³⁷, facilitating the spread of infectious disease and sickness, as witnessed to by the early death of Deputy Governor Bartholomäus Sailer and several other residents in 1529.³⁸

However, whilst the location of settlements was within the colonists' control, something they could not have prepared for was the variable climate of Venezuela, which proved particularly hazardous on expeditions into the interior. The accounts of Federmann, Von Hutten and Oviedo all describe in detail the changing terrain of the interior, from damp, fertile valleys to dense jungle, to barren and freezing mountains. Before the colonists had time to adapt to one climatic phenomenon they moved to another, making mortality rates extremely high on the discovery expeditions (See Table 1), which proved disastrous for the already under-populated Welser colony.

The climate the French colonists encountered in Canada could not have been more different from that of Venezuela, yet it was no less hostile. Unlike the Germans, the French did not possess a particularly advanced publishing industry and reports concerning the New World were rare.³⁹ It is possible that the numerous French fishermen that had exploited the resources in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for several decades may have relayed climatic information to their countrymen. However, the only definite geographical knowledge the outgoing mission of 1541 had was that obtained on the previous two voyages of Jacques Cartier. What was particularly unfamiliar to the French was the sudden change from the dry, mild climate they first encountered to the long winter that followed, and this is reflected in the accounts of Cartier. During his second voyage Cartier had described the area surrounding Cap-Rouge as "a fine country" comparable to France, before ultimately encountering a fierce winter, which contributed to the deaths of over twenty of his crew and depleted their meagre resources.⁴⁰ Similarly, on the colonisation voyage, Cartier gave another prosperous account of the land to be settled, comparing its flora to France and suggesting it was an area of abundant natural resources.⁴¹ Despite his previous experience of the Canadian winter, Cartier seems to have been unable to comprehend the sudden climatic change from the autumn period, suggesting why a suitable store of provisions was never collected when the chance was

³⁵ N.D. Cook, *Born to Die: disease and New World conquest, 1492-1650* (Cambridge, 1998) pp. 1-15

³⁶ J. Hemming, *The Search for El Dorado* (London, 1978) p. 17

³⁷ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 30

³⁸ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 166

³⁹ D.B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London, 1990) pp. 6-7.

⁴⁰ Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-6', pp. 57, 76-9

⁴¹ Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', pp. 100-1

available. It is possible that Cartier believed his winter experience of 1535-6 was unique, and that Canada should share a comparable climate to France given its latitudinal similarity, on which sixteenth-century geographical thought placed great faith.⁴² Whether this was the case, Cartier's expedition was not prepared for a repeat of the winter of his previous voyage.

The severity of the Canadian winter is further detailed in the account of Roberval's stay, as the settlers of France-Roy succumbed to cold, disease, starvation and ill-discipline.⁴³ Such a dire situation emphasises how unprepared the colonists were to adapt to the bitter Canadian climate. As with the Germans in Venezuela, the French would have found it difficult to master their environment, whatever knowledge they possessed. However, unlike the Germans, they at least had experience of the harshness of the climate they were settling, yet did not use this knowledge sufficiently for colonial preparation.

"False Geography"

Perhaps the most significant reason why Europeans attempted to settle, and persevered, in such hostile climates was the influence of "false geography", pertaining to the potential acquisition of wealth. Colonists were far more likely to tolerate living in an inhospitable environment if there was a chance they could make their fortunes from it.⁴⁴ This certainly appears the case in the Welser colony, as the early settlers hurried off with the German governors in search of the rumoured gold that was supposedly present in all tropical lands. Common belief amongst Europeans in the sixteenth century suggested that there existed in the tropics "a merciless heat [which] forged...precious metals and stones."⁴⁵ However, the early Welser expeditions were not simply aimed at obtaining gold, but also at finding a sea passage to the Far East, where the Welser were already engaged in the lucrative spice trade through their Portuguese contacts.⁴⁶ One of the reasons Ambrose Alfinger founded Maracaibo in a seemingly unsuitable area of swampland was because he believed that beyond the great lake lay a body of water that was connected to the Pacific Ocean and consequently offered a straightforward passage to the East.⁴⁷ (See Map 5) Similarly, Nikolaus Federmann makes frequent reference to a "South Sea" in the account of his first *entrada* between 1530 and 1531. Indeed, Federmann's motive for his first enterprise was "to take a trip into the

⁴² W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (Ontario, 1990) p. 5

⁴³ 'Roberval's Voyage, 1542-3', pp. 110-1

⁴⁴ E. Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London, 2009) p. 13

⁴⁵ N.W. Gomez, *The Tropics of Empire: why Columbus sailed south to the Indies* (Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2008) p. 50

⁴⁶ Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World*, p. 96

⁴⁷ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 182

gold as part of a ceremonial ritual at Lake Guatavita during the previous century.⁵⁰ Europeans turned this symbolic act into proof of extensive wealth, which was only fuelled by the Atahualpa ransom in Peru.⁵¹ The Welser colonists were just one group who diverted numerous resources and men away from their colonial centres in pursuit of this myth, which remained believable because of the geographical association between gold and the tropics.⁵² Consequently, the existence of “El Dorado” was never doubted, as is shown in Philipp von Hutten’s account of Georg Hohermuth’s mission, where any rumour of gold provoked great excitement in the author.⁵³ Von Hutten also describes in one of his letters how a native cacique gave the Europeans “great news of gold and sheep.”⁵⁴ Bandelier recounted how in 1513 Vasco Nunez de Balboa was informed in Panama of the golden lands of the south, where large sheep (undoubtedly llamas) were used “as beasts of burden” to transport the gold.⁵⁵ This is yet another example of how indications of genuine wealth, coupled with European mythologizing, inspired the likes of Hohermuth and Von Hutten (who conducted his own search for El Dorado from 1541⁵⁶) to venture further into the hostile environment of the interior, despite being deprived of exact geographical locations for riches. In the process, they lost many men and provisions that could have proved invaluable to the survival of the Welser colony.

The curse of “false geography” also played its part in the French failure, although to a slightly lesser extent than in Venezuela. Besides the myth of latitudinal similarity, the French were originally also confident of finding a western route to the Far East, just as Alfinger and Federmann had been. Indeed, the main purpose of Cartier’s first two voyages had been to find such a passage, building on the reconnaissance of Giovanni da Verrazano who believed he had seen the Pacific Ocean over a narrow strip of land whilst exploring the East Coast of North America for the French crown in 1524.⁵⁷ This search for a throughway to the East became interlinked with the mythical Kingdom of Saguenay, a supposedly rich land the natives claimed was due west of Hochelaga.⁵⁸ The possibility of a golden kingdom existing in the harsh lands of Canada was a belief the French subscribed to. Indeed, such a

⁵⁰ See: A.F.A. Bandelier, *The Gilded Man (El Dorado) and other pictures of the Spanish occupancy of America* (New York, 1893) pp. 8-15

⁵¹ F. Merchant, ‘Legend and Fact about Gold in Early America’, *Western Folklore*, Volume 13(2/3) (1954) pp. 172-3

⁵² Others included Diego de Ordaz (1531) and Alonso de Herrera (1534) from Paria, Gonzalo Pizarro from Peru (1539) and Hernan Perez de Quesada from Santa Marta (1540).

⁵³ For example see P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, pp. 67, 69

⁵⁴ ‘Philipp von Hutten an den Kaiserlichen Rat Matthias Zimmermann: Brief aus Coro vom 30 Juli/30 Oktober 1538’ in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 100. (Original: “gaben sie uns groß Zeitung von Gold und Schafen”)

⁵⁵ Bandelier, *The Gilded Man*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶ J. Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft in Sudamerika (1528-1556): historische Rekonstruktion, Historiografie und lokale Erinnerungskultur in Kolumbien und Venezuela* (Munich, 2005) p. 169

⁵⁷ Allen, ‘From Cabot to Cartier’, p. 514

⁵⁸ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Second Voyage, 1535-6’, p. 65

belief was later popularised by the great Jesuit historian Jose de Acosta who “felt that it was God’s design to place mineral wealth in the remotest parts of the world among the most primitive peoples” in order to entice more civilised persons there.⁵⁹ However, Cartier’s failure to pass the Lachine Rapids during his second voyage ensured he could not dismiss the geographical rumours of both the Europeans and the natives.⁶⁰ Consequently, both he and Roberval persisted in diverting human resources and provisions in pursuit of these myths during the attempt at colonisation. Here, *real* geographical barriers prevented the dismissal of “false geography”, just as in Venezuela, where treacherous mountains and dense forests prevented the advance of Hohermuth and Von Hutten to the supposed territory of “El Dorado”, ensuring the myth endured.

The Welser and French were both hampered by inhospitable climates that brought disease and starvation. Nevertheless, their failure to adapt and learn from experience ensured they wasted valuable men and provisions in the pursuit of geographical rumour, rather than facing up to geographical reality by creating a sustainable base for colonial development in the first place.

Insufficient Provisions

Acquiring Provisions

The climatic difficulties confronting arrivals in the New World put great importance on ensuring colonies were well-provisioned from the outset, to allow settlers time to adapt to their new environment. For the Welser in Venezuela this was an immediate problem because of their unique method of funding their colony. They employed a credit system, in which resources for the colony were sold to the settlers by the Welser themselves on credit, as a form of loan, with the expectation that debts would soon be repaid, with interest.⁶¹ This lack of direct funding placed the financial burden of the colony onto the colonists themselves.⁶² Consequently, it was up to them which provisions they wanted to buy, and these were not always in the best interests of the colony itself. On his arrival in Coro in 1535, Philipp von Hutten complained that the inhabitants were “quite miserable and poor and in great debt” to the Welser, having spent their credit on provisions for

⁵⁹ In Hemming, *Search for El Dorado*, p. 9

⁶⁰ There is some debate as to which rapids halted Cartier’s water-borne advance. It is possible that it was the Long Sault of the Ottawa River, which joins the St. Lawrence at Montreal (Hochelaga). It is most likely however that it was the Lachine Rapid, which was actually on the St. Lawrence River. D.B. Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: the Norse Voyages to 1612* (New York; London, 1977) p. 186

⁶¹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 164

⁶² This credit funding was probably based on the *Verlag* system employed by the German merchant companies for mining enterprises in Europe, in which individual investors would attain credit to begin mining operations for a company and repay their debts with their profits. J. H. Parry, *Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration and Settlement 1450 to 1650* (London, 1963) p. 50

missions into the interior, where they hoped to find gold with which to repay their debts.⁶³ This ensured the main settlements of Coro and Maracaibo were constantly under-provisioned, with the colonists unaided by the high prices demanded by the Welser for goods.⁶⁴ Compounding matters, the Welser were unable even to collect the dues owed to them effectively, with many debtors fleeing the colony without paying.⁶⁵ The Spanish Crown had announced a decree in 1534, prohibiting unauthorised movement between South American territories.⁶⁶ However, in reality this was hard to implement and was overlooked by men trying to escape debts in Venezuela. As a result, the Welser themselves became financially insecure and unable to provide basic goods to the already impoverished settlers, even on credit.⁶⁷ It is therefore unsurprising that when Von Hutten returned to Coro in 1538, after three years on the Hohermuth mission, he declared the capital “a corrupt country... [where] we lived almost with as much difficulty as on the trip.”⁶⁸ A shortage of food and production provisions, coupled with the low settler numbers of the colony made it very difficult to preserve the main towns, let alone allow them to develop, particularly without significant native labour.

The French in Canada did not suffer the same level of personal indebtedness as the Venezuelan colonists. However, the French royal budget crisis, caused by years of intermittent warfare with the Habsburgs in the Italian Wars, prevented significant funding for the enterprise, which probably affected the provisions taken.⁶⁹ In 1538, Cartier drew up a list recommending the provisions required for Canada, with regards to food, ships and armaments and “all other effects for two or three years.”⁷⁰ It is difficult to determine whether Cartier got his wish. His account of the third voyage states on leaving St. Malo in May 1541, “five ships set sayle together well furnished and victualled for two yeare.”⁷¹ How “well furnished” the ships were is debatable, but the fact the mission lasted only a year suggests the mariner’s claims were overoptimistic. Cartier noted that a

⁶³ ‘Philipp Von Hutten an den Kaiserlichen Rat Matthias Zimmermann: Brief aus Coro vom 23 Februar 1535’ in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 94. (Original: “ganz elend und arm und in großen Schulden.”)

⁶⁴ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 499.

⁶⁵ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, p.183

⁶⁶ ‘Que salgan todos los intrusos de Venezuela’ [19/07/1534] in R. Moll & E. Otte (eds.), *Cedularios de la monarquía española relativos a la provincia de Venezuela, 1529-1552*, 2 vols (Caracas, 1959; 1982), vol. 1, pp. 141-2

⁶⁷ G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven: die provinz Venezuela während der Welser-Verwaltung (1528-1556)* (Berlin, 2000) p. 708

⁶⁸ ‘Philipp von Hutten an seinen Vater Bernhard von Hutten zu Birkenfeld: Brief aus Coro vom 20 Oktober 1538’ in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 121. (Original: “fanden wir das ganz Land verderbt, das wir hier mit anderer Muhe schier, dann auf dem Zug lebten.”)

⁶⁹ J. Garriison, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483-1598: Renaissance, Reformation and Rebellion*, trans. R. Rex (Basingstoke, 1995) p. 156

⁷⁰ ‘List of Men and Effects for Canada’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 127-8

⁷¹ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Third Voyage, 1541’, pp. 97-98

significant amount of provisions were consumed on the outward voyage in 1541, as bad weather resulted in a lengthy crossing.⁷² Certainly, the fact that both the Cartier and Roberval groups quickly became reliant on bartering with the natives for food suggests provisions were inadequate, a point noted in the Roberval account as “they tooke a view of the victuals, and it was found that they fell out short.”⁷³ Again, it must be questioned how Cartier in particular, as well as others who had previously wintered in Canada, failed to prepare adequately for survival in the hostile environment they were determined to settle. The most reasonable suggestions are a lack of funding, meaning the expeditions were severely under-provisioned, or a lack of discipline amongst the colonists, whereby an adequate supply was quickly depleted without considering the ramifications during the winter period.

Re-Provisioning

If provisions ran low in the New World, colonies had two potential solutions for replenishing supplies. They could either appeal to the parent country or make use of domestic sources. Although the Welser sent very few ships from the Old World to Venezuela during their administration of the colony, the Germans had links to Santo Domingo, which was at that time the administrative and economic centre of the Spanish New World. German merchants had played a key early role in financing Portuguese trade in the East and Spanish trade in the West during the early sixteenth century, and many German representatives followed the colonisers to their new lands.⁷⁴ The Welser agents were no different, and contemporary accounts make frequent reference to requests for provisions from Venezuela to Santo Domingo, where the Welser had established a trading station in 1526.⁷⁵ This is most notable after the appointment of Georg Hohermuth as governor in 1534, suggesting provisions had been depleted by the disorderly rule of Ambrose Alfinger. Even before arriving in Venezuela, Hohermuth had a request for “ships, horses and maintenance as other things necessary for a good provision” approved by the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo.⁷⁶ After his unprofitable discovery mission, Hohermuth’s desperation for provisions was heightened, and the governor himself travelled to Santo Domingo in December 1539 in order to acquire a wide range of

⁷² Ibid., p. 98

⁷³ ‘Roberval’s Voyage, 1542-3’, p.110

⁷⁴ Parry, *Age of Reconnaissance*, p. 50. For example, the Welser invested 20,000 florins in a Portuguese voyage to India in 1505, making a 175 per cent profit when it returned laden with exotic goods.

⁷⁵ M. Häberlein, ‘Conquista’ in T. Adam (ed.), *Germany and the Americas: culture, politics and history* (Santa Barbara, 2005) p. 254

⁷⁶ ‘Recomendación de Jorge Hohermut a la audiencia real de Santo Domingo’ [13/11/1534] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, p. 171

stock for the colony.⁷⁷ Such urgent reliance on the Welser trading station in the Caribbean is also evident from Philipp von Hutten's accounts. Writing to a friend on his arrival in February 1535, Von Hutten explains "we always get fresh food from Santo Domingo".⁷⁸ Furthermore, by the summer of 1538 he was anxiously "waiting all day on four ships, to get away with food and clothes from Santo Domingo."⁷⁹ Two points are important here. Firstly, the Welser had a strong merchant presence on Santo Domingo that allowed them to acquire goods near to Venezuela, yet their economic policy of passing the costs onto already indebted settlers meant they did not make the most of this arrangement. Secondly, the idea that the Venezuelan colonists were heavily reliant on Santo Domingo for such basics as food and clothing suggests a failure to make use of the domestic sources available to them.

As Williamson realises, "it was patently not in [European colonists'] interests to settle quietly to a peasant's life tilling the soil," when that is what most of them had left Europe to try and escape.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, for a New World colony to survive it had to be at least partially self-sufficient, meaning domestic cultivation was essential. As will be shown below, the Welser colonists failed to mobilise a native labour force effectively, yet were unwilling or too short on numbers to provide the necessary work themselves, creating the shortage Von Hutten highlights. Although Coro and Maracaibo were not situated in ideal locations, Oviedo reported that Bishop Rodrigo de Bastidas had informed him that the land was fertile, ideal for cultivation of maize and fruits, and with a plethora of game to be hunted.⁸¹ Indeed, the Caquetio Indians had inhabited the regions around Coro and Maracaibo for centuries before Spanish arrival and had invariably produced a surplus of food.⁸² The failure to adapt to different cultivation methods and different crops was a problem that the Europeans frequently encountered in the New World and made native labour crucial. Von Hutten frequently complains of a lack of "wine" and "corn" in his accounts of Venezuela, yet suitable substitutes existed, such as maize and fermented root-drinks. This inability to make use of domestic provisions was a key reason why the Welser colonists failed to supply their settlements adequately, prohibiting them from growing, and at the same time increasing the debt of the province by over-relying on imports.

⁷⁷ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 299

⁷⁸ 'Philipp Von Hutten an den Kaiserlichen Rat Matthias Zimmermann: Brief aus Coro vom 23 Februar 1535' in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 95

⁷⁹ 'Newe Zeytung' in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 74. (Original: "warten alle Tag auf vier Schiff, so mit Proviant und Kleidern von Santo Domingo kommen sollen.")

⁸⁰ Williamson, *History of Latin America*, p. 10

⁸¹ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 58

⁸² J.H. Steward & L.C. Faron, *Native Peoples of South America* (New York; Toronto; London, 1959) p. 242

The French in Canada can also be accused of failing to create a suitable level of self-sufficiency in terms of provisions. Shortly after settling at Charlesbourg-Royale, Cartier claimed that the surrounding land was ideal for cultivation with vines that “grow of their owne accord” and cabbages “which grew and sprong up out of the ground in eight days.”⁸³ His account is supported by that of Jean Alfonse, who suggested the grain grown was “as that of France” and that numerous types of fish could be taken from the waters.⁸⁴ Yet the starvation endured through the winter months on both enterprises suggests such a plentiful supply was either fictitious or inappropriate for the climate. Indeed, archaeologists argue that “no evidence was found to confirm Cartier’s and Roberval’s reports that foodstuffs were grown around the settlement”.⁸⁵ Olive Dickason has suggested that the native St. Lawrence Iroquoians effectively stored large amounts of food for the winter months and continued to hunt despite the freezing conditions.⁸⁶ This had been evident on Cartier’s second voyage, when the French relied on buying native surplus food in order to survive the winter of 1535-6.⁸⁷ The French obviously failed to learn from past experience and depleted their food provisions rapidly. Samuel de Champlain would learn from these mistakes in the seventeenth century, quickly clearing land for cultivation at Quebec before the Canadian winter, ensuring the French themselves produced food.⁸⁸

The failure of the French to create their own provisions was even more crucial than in Venezuela, as they did not have a way of importing regular supplies. Being the first French colony in the New World, the Canadian settlers could not rely on an already established presence and could certainly not trade with the Spanish there, due both to the distance and enmity between the two nations and their colonies. This ultimately meant any re-provisioning the French required would have to be sent from the Old World. However, the two attempts made failed. Firstly, Cartier was forced to wait too long for the Roberval mission to join him. He had immediately sent two ships back to France on arrival at Cap-Rouge to inquire “how Monsieur de Roberval was not yet come”,⁸⁹ but by the time the General was leaving France, Cartier was heading home.⁹⁰ Secondly, a purported voyage by Paul d’Aussillon in 1543 is the only example of Francois trying to replenish Roberval’s Canadian colony. However, it is unclear whether d’Aussillon ever reached Cap-Rouge and if he did it was

⁸³ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Third Voyage, 1541’, p. 100

⁸⁴ J. Alfonse, ‘Cosmographie’ in H.P. Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Ottawa, 1924) pp. 296-9

⁸⁵ J-A. Bouchard-Perron & A. Bain, ‘From Myth to Reality: archaeobotany at the Cartier-Roberval Upper Fort site’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Volume 43(1) (2009) pp. 100-1

⁸⁶ O.P. Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: a history of founding peoples from earliest times* (Toronto, 1997) p. 77

⁸⁷ R. Boissonault, ‘Jacques Cartier: his life and exploits (1491-1557)’, *History and Archaeology*, Volume 10 (1980), p. 29

⁸⁸ S.E. Morison, *Samuel de Champlain, Father of New France* (Boston; Toronto, 1972), p. 106

⁸⁹ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Third Voyage, 1541’, pp. 99-100

⁹⁰ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, p. 30

already too late.⁹¹ Given their knowledge of the financial difficulties of the Crown and their own experience of Canada, it is astonishing that the French failed to prepare for a greater degree of self-sufficiency, knowing that re-supply from abroad was highly unlikely and would take such a long time.

Provisions for Exploration

A possible explanation for the rapid exhaustion of provisions in some New World colonies was because of their diversion for missions of discovery. The Welser governors took more men on their expeditions into the interior than they left behind in Coro and Maracaibo, requiring a high level of maintenance for the *entradas* in terms of provisions. In his *Historia*, Oviedo highlights the continual problem of acquiring food and other necessities for the Christians exploring Venezuela. Even as early as the founding of Maracaibo in 1529, a Spanish lieutenant, Luis Gonzalez de Leyva, was forced into the interior to search for supplies.⁹² During Ambrose Alfinger's expedition between 1531 and 1533 Oviedo relates how the "low supplies" of the Christians could not be supplemented by a "barren land."⁹³ He also references the "great suffering" experienced by Nikolaus Federmann and his men after eight days without replenishment in 1536.⁹⁴ The constant need to acquire provisions in the midst of a hostile environment undoubtedly lengthened the discovery missions considerably, especially when taking into account the numerous rest stops taken by the suffering Europeans.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Welser explorers determined the best way to maintain provisions on an *entrada* was to plunder the native settlements they encountered, which had severe repercussions. In his *Indianische Historia*, Federmann distinguishes between the natives that "received us kindly"⁹⁶ and gave the Europeans food, and those pueblos they "ambushed...unexpectedly" to take food by force.⁹⁷ Once more, self-sufficiency was absent amongst the European colonists and the wastage of supplies on their expeditions only left their settlements more destitute and unable to produce. Furthermore, the loss of horses in the interior undoubtedly slowed the *entradas* down, diminished the European threat towards the native populations and therefore potentially reduced the economic worth of Welser exploration, which they relied on so heavily for wealth accumulation.

⁹¹ Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, p. 52

⁹² Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 8

⁹³ Ibid, p.23

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.49

⁹⁵ In one of his letters, Philipp von Hutten states: "as the people were new in the country, they were almost all sick, so we had to rest a lot." 'Philipp von Hutten an den Kaiserlichen Rat Matthias Zimmermann: Brief aus Coro vom 30 Juli/30 Oktober 1538' in P.Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 98. (Original: "Und wie das Volk im Land neu war, fielen sie fast alle krank, darum wir viel still liegen mussten.")

⁹⁶ Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, p. 18

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp. 31-2

Whilst such exploratory endeavour was not as widespread during the French stay in Canada, the division of resources between discovery missions and the forts at Cap-Rouge contributed to the depletion of provisions. Cartier's suggestion in his account that the French had adequate resources for two years was unlikely to be factoring in the provisions required for his attempted trip to Saguenay, which was repeated by Roberval in 1543. Within weeks of arrival Cartier provisioned two boats "furnished with men and victuals" and set off down the St Lawrence towards Hochelaga.⁹⁸ After encountering difficulties trying to pass the Lachine Rapids the expedition began to run low on food and, as so often with the Welser, the French became reliant on native hospitality.⁹⁹ However, their refusal to eat the unsalted meat of their hosts forced them to turn back, their mission having failed and wasted a significant portion of the provisions needed for the fort development at Charlesbourg-Royale.¹⁰⁰ Roberval similarly failed in his quest for Saguenay, losing "eight men and one Barke drowned" in the process.¹⁰¹ Such wastefulness for no reward was a key cause of failure for the French colony, as an already under-provisioned fort became further deprived, leading to over-reliance on, and confrontation with, the natives, which contributed to the untenable situation.

The provisioning and re-supply of the Welser and French colonies took different paths, yet resulted in similar outcomes. The Welser had the capability to exploit their privileged trading reputation and monetary power in Europe to finance the colony outright. Indeed, their extensive cash loans to Charles V for his colonial endeavours in the New World shows the Welser could have provided a more stable funding base for Venezuela. However, they chose to follow their mercantile nature by implementing a credit system, effective for smaller commercial projects, yet unsuited to large-scale colonisation. The French had little option for re-provision and were not helped by the political situation in Europe. However, both colonies failed to take advantage of native supplies, ignoring the value of self-sufficient cultivation and wasting precious resources on long and unsuccessful discovery missions.

⁹⁸ Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', p. 102

⁹⁹ "Brought us of their victuals, as Pottage and Fish, and offered us of the same." Ibid., p. 104

¹⁰⁰ M. Guitard, *Jacques Cartier in Canada* (Ottawa, 1984), p. 27

¹⁰¹ 'Roberval's Voyage, 1542-3', p. 113

Insufficient Colonists

Inadequate Numbers

The inadequacy of Welser and French provisioning is further exposed by the fact that neither colony maintained large populations. Only three-hundred men accompanied Ambrose Alfinger to Venezuela in 1529, adding to the few men left in Coro by Juan de Ampies, who had been pacifying the region.¹⁰² For such a large territory, with as yet undefined borders, such a number was insufficient for long-term settlement, especially given that the Welser were supposed to establish two stable settlements of three-hundred people under the conditions of their capitulation. This shortage was compounded by the fact that all the new colonists were men, and within six months the majority of them were exploring with Governor Alfinger. The indentured nature of the majority of the colonists, created by the Welser credit system, accentuated the need for instant wealth. They therefore had little choice but to comply with the ambitious *entrada* policy of the governors. Many of them were experienced in this capacity, having been to other parts of the New World and fought in the Italian Wars.¹⁰³ However, it left the colony devoid of a sufficient number of people to look after primary production and construction, on which any sustainable settlement must rely.

Unbelievably, only three more shipments of settlers from the Old World would arrive in Venezuela during Welser rule. In January 1530, one-hundred-and-twenty-three men arrived in the colony via Santo Domingo. However, the majority of these potential settlers soon left the province to return to Hispaniola after confrontation in Coro, meaning the Venezuelan population barely increased.¹⁰⁴ A second shipment arrived in April 1530, meanwhile, carrying several hundred colonists, the majority of whom appear to have joined the Welser *entradas*.¹⁰⁵ It would be five years before the final shipment, during which time the mortality rate in Venezuela soared to forty-nine per cent, as men died on expeditions to the interior, succumbed to disease in the tropical climate, or fell prey to starvation that plagued the underdeveloped province.¹⁰⁶ (See Table 1) When Georg Hohermuth finally arrived as governor in February 1535 he brought with him six-hundred settlers, which should have boosted the under-populated and under-producing towns of Coro and Maracaibo.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Hohermuth took four-hundred-and-ninety men on his three-year search

¹⁰² Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 162-3

¹⁰³ Avellaneda, 'The Men of Nikolaus Federmann', pp. 389-90

¹⁰⁴ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 170

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 173

¹⁰⁶ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p.710

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 227

for gold just months later; ensuring the potential for colonial development remained low with such depleted numbers in the capital.¹⁰⁸ By 1536, Coro was a “poor affair”, according to the Bishop

Entrada	Number	Survivors	Survival Rate	Notes
Alfingier (1)	200	100	50%	
Alfingier (2)	170	40	23.5%	Including the death of Alfingier
Federmann (1)	114	100	87.7%	
Hohermuth	490	150	30.6%	
Federmann (2)	300	106	35.3%	The majority of the survivors remained in New Granada, never returning to Venezuela
Von Hutten	100	40	40%	Included the death of Von Hutten and Welser

Table 1: Survival rate of the Welser *Entradas*. The table does not take into account the numerous natives that must also have died on these missions.

Source: K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903); J. Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft in Sudamerika* (Munich, 2005); A.F.A. Bandelier, *The Gilded Man* (New York, 1893)

Bastidas, with only fifty temporary huts, whilst Maracaibo was soon to be abandoned, and its mere thirty inhabitants evacuated.¹⁰⁹ Considering that Christopher Columbus took fifteen-hundred men of varying social classes and occupations to populate the comparatively small island of Hispaniola in 1493, the numbers for the vaster Welser colony appear even more insufficient.¹¹⁰ Such low figures highlight the difficulties of both recruiting and maintaining men in the destitute colony of Venezuela.

What became a more acute problem was that the majority of the colonists in Welser-governed Venezuela were Spanish. Even on the few shipments from the Old World, there appear to have been few of the Welser’s fellow Germans. Most men were recruited in Seville or the Canary Islands, rather than inland Europe. It is certainly possible that the religious turmoil caused by the Reformation may have hindered recruitment from the German territories. The Welser hometown of Augsburg, as well as neighbouring Ulm, where many Company employees came from, voted to join the Protestant Schmalkaldic League¹¹¹ in the 1530s, defying Charles V’s Catholic imperialism.¹¹² It is likely that the pro-imperialist Welser wished to avoid unnecessary dissent in their colony by refraining from hiring their religiously-suspect townsmen. However, employing men in Seville was also more convenient for the Welser. They had merchants inhabiting the city who could find the necessary number of men from amongst a Spanish population more familiar with the idea of

¹⁰⁸ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 346

¹⁰⁹ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 198; Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 252-3

¹¹⁰ Williamson, *History of Latin America*, p. 9

¹¹¹ Several imperial cities in Southern Germany, such as Augsburg and Ulm, introduced evangelical reforms during the 1520s and 1530s, cutting their ties with the Catholic Church. “Fearing imperial retribution for their religious deviance, many evangelical imperial cities joined the Schmalkaldic League, which promised military protection to its members”. C.W. Close, *The Negotiated Reformation: Imperial Cities and the Politics of Urban Reform, 1525-1550* (New York, 2009) p. 1

¹¹² M. Greschat, *Martin Bucer: a reformer and his times*, trans. S.E. Buckwalter (Louisville, 2004) pp. 107-113.

emigration.¹¹³ Consequently, German minority rule was established early and was exacerbated by later recruitment in the colony. Without regular shipments from the Old World, the Welser used their trading connections in Santo Domingo to enlist men closer to Venezuela. Given that the vast majority of settlers in Santo Domingo were Spanish, this form of recruitment only increased their majority in Venezuela. Indeed, a good example of the settler origins can be detected from the group of explorers who accompanied Nikolaus Federmann to Cundinamarca in 1536. Out of the forty-five men whose place of birth is known, thirty-nine originated from Spain compared to two from German territory.¹¹⁴ Throughout their rule the Welser governors were vulnerable to the Spanish majority, brought about by their recruitment policy.

As with the Welser, the French were attempting to settle a geographical area of unknown proportions, except they had no neighbouring European provinces to concern themselves with. So whilst they did not have to worry about colonists defecting, they needed to bring enough men to create a large settlement and French presence from scratch. The confused nature of the colonial attempt, with the expedition effectively split into two parts, has made it unclear exactly how many colonists went with Cartier and Roberval. Various spy reports and fishermen's testimonies exist, varying greatly in their estimations. One Spanish spy report, surprisingly supported by Marcel Trudel, suggests fifteen-hundred men and women accompanied the expedition to Canada.¹¹⁵ Given the relatively modest size of the archaeological remains of the settlements at Cap-Rouge, and the problems of recruitment the French suffered, this appears highly fanciful and politically motivated.¹¹⁶ It is probable that the Spanish spy was trying to force Charles V to take action against these "intruders" in the New World, by exaggerating their potential threat. A more conservative and probable estimate of numbers, based on the testimony of Newfoundland sailor Robert Lefant, is that Cartier took some three-hundred settlers with him.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Roberval account suggests the general was accompanied by two-hundred men a year later.¹¹⁸

The failure of Cartier and Roberval to conjoin their expeditions means it is unlikely that there were ever any more than three-hundred French colonists at Cap-Rouge. Given that both Cartier and Roberval took a significant number of their colonists in search of the riches of Saguenay, the few

¹¹³ Häberlein, 'Conquista', p. 254

¹¹⁴ Avellaneda, 'The Men of Nikolaus Federmann', p. 388

¹¹⁵ Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, p. 41; 'Secret Report on Cartier's Expedition: Report by a Spanish Spy on Jacques Cartier's Preparations' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 152-155

¹¹⁶ R. Fiset & G. Samson, 'Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy (1541-3): France's first colonization attempt in the Americas', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Volume 43(1) (2009), p. 63

¹¹⁷ 'Examination of Newfoundland Sailors Regarding Cartier' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. 161

¹¹⁸ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, p. 164

people left behind would undoubtedly have found it difficult to continue construction of the fledgling settlements, whilst producing food and providing defence against increasingly hostile natives. However, such concerns do not appear to have crossed the leaders' minds judging from their narratives. Considering that Cartier had carefully outlined all the men necessary for a long-term stay in Canada in 1538, including a variety of craftsmen and primary producers, it is surprising he deprived Charlesbourg-Royale of so many of them at such a crucial period.¹¹⁹

In the following century, Samuel de Champlain would establish the first enduring French colony in Canada through a permanent core of settlers looking after production, with constant recruitment from the Old World, which Champlain himself lobbied for.¹²⁰ Such re-supply was absent from the Cap-Rouge settlement. The resumption of hostilities with the Habsburgs in 1542 would not have helped, but the enthusiasm Champlain had for colonisation also appears absent amongst the leaders. Cartier was eager to return home with his supposed "gold" and "diamonds" but nothing suggests he wanted to return to the colony. With so many tasks necessary to build a colony from scratch, unaided by an alienated native populace nearby, and the failure of Cartier and Roberval to join forces, the French realistically never had the numbers to construct a sustainable settlement and explore for wealth simultaneously.

Lack of Appeal

A significant reason behind the failure to populate Venezuela and Canada adequately was their lack of appeal to settlers. For Welser-Venezuela, this problem was relative to the other settled provinces in Spanish America. After all, Venezuela was part of what Hugh Honour calls "the New Golden Land," which had been associated with fabulous wealth, especially gold, ever since Columbus' first reports of the New World and the subsequent Aztec conquest.¹²¹ Therefore, it is probable that some individuals were attracted to the province in the hope of striking lucky, as the large proportion that went with the German governors on their missions to the interior attest to. Nevertheless, the rumoured wealth of Venezuela was undoubtedly far less appealing than the confirmed wealth of Mexico, Peru and, after 1539, New Granada, which attracted far more settlers, often with their families.¹²² The Welser could not achieve this stable base in Venezuela and their

¹¹⁹ See: 'List of Men and Effects for Canada', pp. 126-29

¹²⁰ Morison, *Samuel de Champlain*, pp. 106-116.

¹²¹ H. Honour, *The New Golden Land: European images of America from the discoveries to the present time* (London, 1975) pp. 28-50

¹²² J. Lockhart & S.B. Schwarz, *Early Latin America: a history of colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 178-9

own erratic administration, based on the unfavourable credit system, probably made the province even less desirable to the predominantly Spanish settlers coming from the Old World and Santo Domingo. Furthermore, despite preventative laws, many colonists are known to have fled Venezuela, either to the “golden lands” of the West or the Eastern provinces of Paria, Cubagua and Margarita where slave-trading and pearl fishing thrived.¹²³ These provinces not only offered greater wealth but more stability, with their better-populated and productive towns, which were absent from Venezuela during Welser rule.

For the French, Canada was simply an unappealing prospect for Europeans. Rumours of the bitter cold, scurvy and starvation that ravaged Cartier’s second voyage in 1535-6 had probably reached French fishing ports by the time of the colonial expedition.¹²⁴ Certainly, the fact that Cartier and Roberval were forced to recruit at least fifty convicts – not the most willing colonists in any case – highlights the lack of enthusiasm for the project.¹²⁵ Rumours of a golden land may have spread, yet Cartier had brought no actual evidence from the Kingdom of Saguenay, unlike the golden and obsidian ornaments that had made their way back from Spanish America to confirm the presence of riches. For those living away from the seaboard, little knowledge of Canada would have been available, since none of Cartier’s narratives from his previous voyages were printed before 1545.¹²⁶ Furthermore, with French agricultural production at an all time high amongst the rural population during the 1530s, there was no incentive to venture abroad with little promise of betterment.¹²⁷

Inadequate Leadership

Absence from Settlement

The unsuitability of the colonist situation in Venezuela and Canada increased the need for strong leadership in the Welser and French colonies. However, this was not forthcoming. On his arrival in Venezuela in February 1529, Governor Ambrose Alfinger settled at the only established town in the province, Coro. Like many of the first towns in South America it was made-up of temporary buildings and mud streets, and, being isolated on the North coast, was situated poorly for exerting influence over the vast province.¹²⁸ However, instead of remaining to oversee the

¹²³ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, pp. 535-7

¹²⁴ S.E. Morison, *The European Discovery of America: the Northern Voyages A.D.500-1600* (New York, 1971) p. 434

¹²⁵ See: ‘Letters Patent from the Duke of Brittany Empowering Cartier to take Prisoners from the Gaols’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 139-40

¹²⁶ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, pp. 54-9

¹²⁷ F.J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1995) pp. 163-4

¹²⁸ Lockhart & Schwarz, *Early Latin America*, p. 65

development of Coro, Alfinger soon commenced an exploration mission to the west, leaving the Spaniard Luis Sarmiento behind as his deputy.¹²⁹ During this period, the new settlers remaining in Coro were without their appointed governor, undoubtedly creating uncertainty and a lack of discipline amongst people trying to adapt to an alien land. Later in 1529, whilst on his expedition, Alfinger founded Maracaibo, on the shores of the great lake. Juan Friede has suggested Alfinger intended this to be his new capital.¹³⁰ However, the fact that the governor soon departed Maracaibo to continue exploring, leaving Simon de Beteta and only a handful of men behind to fortify the new village, suggests a lack of concern for settlement.¹³¹ Indeed, Maracaibo's abandonment, at a point of destitution in 1536, shows the real importance attributed to it by the Welser governors.

Additionally, the vast distances between settlements in the expansive Venezuelan interior, coupled with an undeveloped road system, meant communication within the colony was extremely problematic.¹³² With the governor at neither one of the two settlements, it is unsurprising that contract holder Heinrich Ehinger attempted to replace Alfinger, whose whereabouts was unknown, with his brother Georg in January 1530. This led to several days of tension in Coro between the opposing forces of Georg Ehinger and Deputy Sarmiento, who was suspicious of any intruders in the province, and it brought disharmony and uncertainty to the colony.¹³³ Sarmiento resisted Ehinger's claims and forced him and his one-hundred-and-twenty-three men to depart Venezuela. Nevertheless, a similar attempted usurpation occurred in April when Hans Seissenhofer arrived from the Old World, also claiming to have the backing of the contract holders to replace the absent Alfinger. It would take the return of Alfinger from his first *entrada* shortly afterwards to put an end to this challenge.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, such strife in Coro forced the renegotiation of the royal capitulation from the Ehinger to the Welser name to prevent similar events from reoccurring, which resulted largely because of the absence of Governor Alfinger.¹³⁵ Later, during his second *entrada*, Alfinger left Bartolomé de Santillana as his deputy in Coro. He subsequently carried out systematic abuse of the native population, leading to severe repercussions for the colony and indictment for Santillana.

¹²⁹ J. de Castellanos, *Elegias de Varones Ilustres de Indias* (Madrid, 1944) p. 186

¹³⁰ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 186

¹³¹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p.167

¹³² It is about 241 km between Coro and Maracaibo: <http://www.distance-calculator.co.uk/world-distances-maracaibo-to-coro.htm>

¹³³ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 170-1.

¹³⁴ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 188

¹³⁵ The new contract was formalised on 17th February 1531

Alfinger's absences were also typical of his successors at the head of the Welser colony. Georg Hohermuth remained in Coro for only three months on arrival in February 1535 before beginning his three-year search for riches in the interior. A letter from Bishop Bastidas to Emperor Charles V, dated 2nd April 1538, highlights the concern for Governor Hohermuth who: "on May 12th this year, will be three years since he left Coro." The Bishop also voices anxiety over Hohermuth's deputy Nikoluas Federmann, who had been ordered to re-supply the "uninhabitable" fledgling settlement at Cabo de la Vela, but had been absent since December 1536.¹³⁶ The detrimental affect the absence of the governor had on the Welser colony is evident and was worst in the case of Philipp von Hutten, who was present in Coro for less than ten per cent of his tenure (See Table 2). While he searched for the fabled "El Dorado", the colony effectively collapsed in his absence.

Governor	Time as Governor (Months)	Time Spent at Capital (Months)	Percentage at Capital (%)
Ambrose Alfinger	51	13	25.5
Georg Hohermuth	64	24	37.5
Philipp von Hutten	63	6	9.5
Licenciate Tolosa	30	28	93.3

Table 2: Time Spent in Capital by Welser Governors of Venezuela. Note: Philipp von Hutten was never officially appointed Governor, although he was the highest-ranking Welser official in the colony after 1540.
Source: K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903)

None of the Welser-appointed governors came close to spending even half of their term in the capital Coro or any other settlement. It was only when Licenciate Tolosa was given temporary charge by the Council of the Indies in 1546, after the murder of Hutten, that some stability and progress was brought to the colony by the governor. During his short tenure, Coro was repopulated, the town of Tocuyo was developed, trade links were established with neighbouring provinces, and a new settlement on the coast at Burburuata was founded (See Map 1).¹³⁷ More significantly, his constant presence in the capital (by now Tocuyo) centralised authority, allowing for more efficient discipline and delegation of tasks to the colonists, which became the hallmark of Spanish administration in the New World.

The French colony at Cap-Rouge had a far shorter duration than the Welser in Venezuela, leaving less time for absence of the leader. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Roberval, appointed "head, leader, and captain of the said enterprise" was not even present during the initiation of the

¹³⁶ 'Fragmentos de la carta del Obispo de Venezuela (2 de abril de 1538)' in J. Friede (ed.), *Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de Colombia (1509-1550)* 10 vols (Bogotá, 1955-1960), vol. 4, p. 298

¹³⁷ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 349-66

colony in the late summer of 1541.¹³⁸ To compound matters Jacques Cartier, who was originally commissioned as captain-general and led the expedition in the absence of Roberval, left the Charlesbourg-Royale colony three weeks into fortification in search of the mythical Kingdom of Saguenay, leaving only a lieutenant in charge.¹³⁹ Whilst no documentary evidence exists to describe the attempts to create a settlement in the absence of the two leaders, the fact Charlesbourg-Royale was abandoned in the spring of 1542 suggests significant problems were encountered. This is unsurprising considering the colonists were without authoritative leadership in their first few months in an unknown land (as occurred with the original Welser settlers in Coro). When Roberval arrived to re-establish the colony as France-Roy in July 1542, a more concerted effort appears to have been made to create a strong settlement.¹⁴⁰ Roberval, an expert in fortification who had overseen mining projects in Europe on behalf of King Francois¹⁴¹, stayed with the colony during its first winter, overseeing its construction. Nevertheless, by June 1543 Roberval too was on the search for Saguenay, leaving only thirty men, under a Monsieur de Royeze, at an uncompleted France-Roy, similar to the experience of the settlers at Maracaibo under the Welser in 1529.¹⁴² The colony was abandoned shortly after Roberval's return, suggesting his absence played a contributing factor in the failure of the enterprise.

Explorers not Colonists

The continued absences of the Welser governors and French lieutenants can reasonably be explained by an exploratory desire amongst the expedition leaders, which overrode their responsibility to colonisation. All the Welser governors embarked on costly and lengthy missions into the vast Venezuelan interior, driven by myths of "El Dorado" and the successes of the conquests of the Aztecs in Mesoamerica and Incas in the Andes.¹⁴³ Indeed, it is hard to argue against the exploratory achievements of Alfinger, Federmann, Hohermuth and Hutten whose enthusiasm for journeying led them to "discover" vast tracts of previously unknown land. However, this ultimately conflicted with their appointed duty, which was to ensure the Welser colony in Venezuela survived and flourished.¹⁴⁴ The Germans typified the conquistador spirit, with constant adventuring and warring with native tribes. However, their determination to attain the riches that were generally thought to exist in the tropics led them to spend far too long away from the centre of the colony,

¹³⁸ 'Roberval's Commission', p. 145

¹³⁹ The Viscount of Beaupre. Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', p. 102

¹⁴⁰ Fiset & Samson, 'Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy', pp. 63-68

¹⁴¹ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, p. 28

¹⁴² 'Roberval's Voyage, 1542-3', p. 112

¹⁴³ Merchant, 'Legend and Fact about Gold in Early America', pp. 170-1

¹⁴⁴ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, pp. 266-7

making it hard to judge areas needing attention and weakening Welser authority in Venezuela in the process.

In the French case, Jacques Cartier is the perfect example of an explorer forced to become a colonial leader. His reputation had been established with his previous voyages to Canada between 1534 and 1536, which had no pretences of colonial enterprise.¹⁴⁵ Although it is difficult to establish the motives of historical figures, Cartier's persistence in trying to find a route past Hochelaga to the Kingdom of Saguenay, suggests he never gave up on his original desire to find a western route through North America to the riches of Asia. Indeed, at the beginning of his third account, Cartier fails to mention anything about a colonising mission, instead focusing on the discovery of new land and the "great riches" of Saguenay.¹⁴⁶ Dividing the leadership between Roberval, remaining in France, and Cartier, a born explorer, was always going to entail this risk. Yet, poor preparation and a lack of foresight made it a reality. Whilst Roberval himself was no explorer, he was a flamboyant courtier in a ruinous financial position and therefore it is little surprise he also chased the fabled Saguenay.¹⁴⁷ Without a stable and well-provisioned settlement first, such missions were irresponsible, although something many colonising expeditions fell prey to. Even Christopher Columbus, the most famed of all explorers, neglected his governing duties on Hispaniola to continue his search for a Western route to Asia. However, in Columbus' case, the Spanish had quickly established a large settlement with numerous royal officials experienced in administration, ensuring the colony survived despite him. The Welser and French did not have such a luxury.

Minority Rule

The increasingly Spanish character of the Welser colony, brought about by the Company's recruitment policy, created a further problem for the German governors. To maintain control over a virtually foreign settlement without stirring nationalist tension must have been a constant dilemma for the Welser authorities and the frequent absences of their governors would have made the Germans easy scapegoats for any problems amongst the settlers. Furthermore, the contractual dispute that dogged the colony between 1529 and 1531 divided the German camp between those supporting the Ehinger family, merchants of the Company who signed the original capitulation with Hieronymus Sailer, and the Welser. Such disunity amongst minority rulers was not advisable and ultimately led to greater Spanish interference within Venezuela, as royal officials were forced to mediate the contract dispute, as well as the strife caused by the actions of Alfinger's deputy,

¹⁴⁵ 'Commission from Admiral Chabot to Cartier' in *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. 118

¹⁴⁶ Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', p. 97

¹⁴⁷ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, pp. 30-1

Bartolome de Santillana.¹⁴⁸ It is evident from *Royal Audiencia* documents and correspondence from Venezuela that there was a clear animosity towards the “Alemanes” from Spanish colonists and authorities in the New World, who felt “their” territory had been invaded by a foreign power.¹⁴⁹

Whilst the French did not have to worry about a multinational expedition in Canada, a form of minority rule still existed. Roberval was a renowned Protestant, who had been commissioned to found a colony that would supposedly lead to a “growth of our mother the Holy Catholic Church”, through conversion of the native Iroquoians.¹⁵⁰ Whilst Francois’ promise of evangelization has now been widely accepted by historians as a political ruse to win support from the papacy for his expedition, the religious element of the colony should not be overlooked.¹⁵¹ Given that Roberval’s commission had replaced the one previously awarded to Cartier, it is possible their religious differences increased animosity between the two supposed leaders of the colonial attempt.¹⁵² Indeed, when returning from the abandoned Charlesbourg-Royale settlement, Cartier failed to inform Roberval at their Newfoundland meeting place of the cure for scurvy, which had killed a number of his own men on his second voyage.¹⁵³ This reflects the internal rivalry that appears to have existed between Roberval and his “subordinate” Cartier, whose personal, and possibly religious, animosity led to the failure to exchange such vital climatic details.¹⁵⁴ As a result, Roberval lost about fifty men to the disease during the winter of 1542-3, depleting an already small group of colonists simply because of the failure to communicate precious geographical knowledge.¹⁵⁵

Additionally, recent archaeological excavations of Roberval’s France-Roy settlement suggest a distinct separation between the noblemen on the mission and the rest of the colonists, based on the high concentration of valuable objects found in one section of the fort.¹⁵⁶ Francois had encouraged Roberval to take “other persons of excellent character” - most likely noblemen and

¹⁴⁸ See Below

¹⁴⁹ J.F. Sachse, *History of the German Role in the Discovery, Exploration and Settlement of the New World* (Bowie, Md., 1991) pp. 100-2

¹⁵⁰ ‘Roberval’s Commission’, p. 145

¹⁵¹ See A. Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians: historiography and the uses of Jacques Cartier* (Vancouver, 2010) p. 175

¹⁵² Especially if you subscribe to the view, common amongst some French Canadian nationalists, that Cartier was driven by a deep religious motive to spread Catholicism to Canada. See: L. Groulx, *La découverte du Canada: Jacques Cartier* (Montreal, 1934)

¹⁵³ See: K. Rodahl, ‘Nutritional Requirements in Cold Climates’, *The Journal of Nutrition*, Volume 53 (1954) p. 585

¹⁵⁴ T. Renaud, ‘Rivalry and Mutiny: the internal struggles of sixteenth-century North American colonization parties’, *Terrae Incognitae*, Volume 43(1) (2011) pp. 28-9

¹⁵⁵ Morison, *The European Discovery of America*, p. 450

¹⁵⁶ H. Cote, ‘The archaeological collection from the Cartier-Roberval site (1541-3): a remarkable testimony to French colonization efforts in the Americas’, *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Volume 43(1) (2009) pp. 83-4

courtiers - with him to Canada.¹⁵⁷ The probability of Roberval selecting fellow Protestants as companions is high and therefore the division within the colony would have been along both social *and* religious lines, undoubtedly causing resentment amongst the poorer Catholic majority. The rigidly accepted social hierarchies in France during the sixteenth century would have made acceptance of noblemen and their privileges on the mission easier. However, the new religious tension appearing in the country may have been evident on the expedition because of Roberval's leadership. Consequently, Francois' decision to place a Protestant nobleman in charge of the mission is unlikely to have contributed to a strong morale and discipline amongst the colonists as they tried to survive the bitter Canadian winter.

Such a decision by Francois to commission a Protestant to take charge of a largely Catholic expedition typifies the poor preparation and lack of foresight that characterised the French and Welser colonies. In addition to placing such faith in questionable geographical "knowledge", both before and after their colonies began, the Welser and French authorities were inadequately prepared to settle and adapt in hostile environments, whilst at the same time attempting to conduct discovery expeditions.

¹⁵⁷ 'Roberval's Commission', p. 147

Chapter 2 – Lust for Riches

False geography led governors and colonists on risky missions of exploration, leading to a neglect of colonial settlements and fortifications, the wastage of men and provisions, and a high outlay of capital. Nevertheless, sheer individual determination and economic necessity often ensured such missions continued, sometimes resulting in great rewards for certain provinces in the New World. However, in the Welser and French colonies, the desire for quick profit and exploitation at the expense of colonial development, as well as poor communication and transportation networks, created the conditions for failure, compounding the original risks of embarking on such ventures.

Desire for Quick Profit

Plunder or Commerce?

On arrival in Venezuela Ambrose Alfinger and his men quickly set the pattern for the economic history of the colony. From the middle of 1529, Alfinger and his charges plundered the native settlements surrounding Coro up to the foundation of Maracaibo, some forty leagues away.¹⁵⁸ The Welser would later be accused in the legal proceedings they faced at the Council of the Indies in Madrid that Alfinger's destructive behaviour prevented the exploitation of fertile land worth about thirty-three thousand pesos a year.¹⁵⁹ This typifies the Welser economic approach; quick and ultimately less profitable gain rather than sustainable development. Concurrent with the plunder of native settlements was the snatching of the natives themselves to be sold into slavery on the island of Hispaniola, where the Indian population had been decimated. Slave-raiding had been occurring along the Venezuelan coast for several decades¹⁶⁰ and the Welser were given the right in 1530 to take natives as slaves in "just war"; something they subsequently abused.¹⁶¹ Again, this was hardly a sustainable strategy, yet was necessary in the eyes of the settlers to free themselves from indebtedness to the Welser, whilst the Company itself was grateful for any repayment, given their original expenditure.¹⁶²

Unsurprisingly, this approach led to the neglect of other potential revenue sources, which could have served the colony well into the future. Aside from the failure to organise agricultural

¹⁵⁸ J. Oviedo y Baños, *The Conquest and Settlement of Venezuela*, trans. J.J. Varner (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London, 1987) p. 18

¹⁵⁹ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 445

¹⁶⁰ G. Moron, *A History of Venezuela* (London, 1964) p. 32

¹⁶¹ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 545

¹⁶² Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, p. 160

production, the Welser foolishly neglected to exploit the lucrative pearl banks of Cabo de la Vela, which lay at the westernmost point of the province, on the border with Santa Marta (See Map 1). The Spaniards had already shown the potential value of pearl-fishing in the eastern territories of Margarita and Cubagua in the 1520s.¹⁶³ In an attempt by the Spanish Crown to replicate this success, the Welser colonists were given a license to sell “gold, silver and pearls” found in Venezuela.¹⁶⁴ However, the Company’s failure to act on this ordinance led to censure from the Crown in 1536, which ordered the Welser to construct a fort at “the pearl fishery in the Cabo de la Vela, which is something very rich and important.”¹⁶⁵ Although that same year Nikolaus Federmann set up a temporary settlement at the Cape under Georg Hohermuth’s orders, he soon abandoned it to begin his illicit western mission to Cundinamarca, leaving the area open to exploitation by other provinces.¹⁶⁶ Despite repeated warnings from the Crown, the Welser neglected Cabo de la Vela and by 1543 jurisdiction of the region had passed to Santa Marta, whose inhabitants had already established the permanent settlement of Riohacha on the Cape.

The Welser similarly failed to take advantage of their mining expertise and the privileges they received from the Crown for engaging in such practices in the New World. They were excused from paying the royal fifth on gold extracted from mines for five years by a concession of 1531,¹⁶⁷ and had agreed the rights to mining in the province of Santa Marta before arrival in Venezuela.¹⁶⁸ For a Company with such extensive mining experience in Europe, it is astonishing the Welser never engaged in mining or smelting activities in Venezuela or Santa Marta, especially after the gold-rich New Granada was awarded to the latter.¹⁶⁹ Once more, it was too lengthy a procedure to establish mining centres for the Welser governors, when it seemed feasible to rob already-extracted gold from the native population. Such missed opportunities bring into question the Welser’s motives for their colony. Were they looking to create a sustainable province for European habitation? Or were they merely using Coro and Maracaibo as base camps for a series of *entradas* in the hope of striking gold, before returning their attentions to the Old World? It is possible that the original vision of the

¹⁶³ A. Romero et al. ‘Cubagua’s Pearl-Oyster Beds: The First Depletion of a Natural Resource Caused by Europeans in the American Continent’, *Journal of Political Ecology*, Volume 6 (1999) p. 64

¹⁶⁴ ‘Licencia a los Welser para tratar con metales, yerbas y toda clase de droguería’ [04/04/1531] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, pp. 74-6

¹⁶⁵ ‘Fragmentos de una consulta del Consejo al Rey’ [Undated] in Friede (ed.), *Documentos Inéditos*, vol. 5, p. 261. (Original: “la pesquería de perlas en el Cabo de la Vela, que es cosa muy rica e importante.”)

¹⁶⁶ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, p.182

¹⁶⁷ See ‘Merced a los Welser del diezmo por el oro de minas por 5 años’ [10/05/1531] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, p. 90

¹⁶⁸ Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World*, p. 111

¹⁶⁹ The Germans had been responsible for improvements in the extraction and smelting processes for several decades prior to 1530. The Welser, like their Augsburg neighbours the Fugger, owned shares in several mining projects across Europe, enabling the dissemination of mining knowledge. H. Waszkis, *Mining in the Americas: Stories and History* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 56; Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World*, p. 93

colony changed after rumours of great wealth, combined with a populace indebted by the Welser credit system, led the colonists to pursue plunder over development. Certainly, their failure to engage in commercial enterprise negated the chances of creating a trade network with the ever-expanding Spanish provinces and ensuring a ready supply of essential commodities to their own settlements. This would have to wait until the Licenciate Tolosa took command of the province in 1546, when Welser control of Venezuela was all but finished.¹⁷⁰

Contrary to the Welser approach in Venezuela, the French in Canada refrained from plundering the surrounding native settlements, doubtless aware of their importance in providing food and other necessities to the Europeans. Indeed, the French originally pursued a trade policy with the native Iroquoians, which had begun in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on Cartier's first visit in 1534.¹⁷¹ Trade and bartering had long been the foundation for French-Native relations in Canada, which the Breton and Norman fishermen plying their trade in the Gulf had helped initiate several decades beforehand. Cartier attempted to carry this policy up the St. Lawrence to the Stadaconans and Hochelagans on his second voyage. This was not necessarily ill-advised, since it created a degree of reciprocity between the two groups on which amicable relations could be formed, something the Welser never attempted.¹⁷² However, as noted above, the dearth of provisions the French possessed on Cartier's second voyage created an unequal trading relationship in which the natives, not the Europeans, dictated bartering agreements.¹⁷³ It is probable that with the lack of preparedness of the colonial expedition that a similar situation arose between 1541 and 1543, accentuated by the deteriorating political relations with the natives. Archaeological evidence shows remnants of native food sources present at the remains of the French forts at Cap-Rouge, suggesting some trade with the natives did occur during the colonial attempt.¹⁷⁴ However, this trade was clearly aimed at survival, not profit, emphasising the divergent motives between the French colonists and those of the Welser, who had better early access to provisions and could focus entirely on economic exploitation.

The potential for profitable trade was not absent for the French in Canada but seems to have been neglected by both Cartier and Roberval. The French successes of the seventeenth century in North America were based on the fur trade, which became highly profitable and a vital source of

¹⁷⁰ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 349-350

¹⁷¹ J. Cartier, 'Cartier's First Voyage, 1534' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. 22

¹⁷² The Welser Company was accused of not engaging in "direct trade" with the natives, which was reasoned to have cost the colony over 8,000 pesos per year. Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 445

¹⁷³ Guitard, *Jacques Cartier in Canada*, p. 23

¹⁷⁴ Fiset & Samson, 'Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy', pp. 59-60

funding for colonial development.¹⁷⁵ However, as Marc Lescarbot noted in his *Nova Francia* of 1606, “in the time of Jacques Cartier beavers were not cared for [whereas now] Frenchmen come to fetch them.”¹⁷⁶ Although beaver pelts were not valued by Europeans for their unique waterproof barbing until the seventeenth century, other animal-coats were still popular. Yet, despite an apparent willingness of the Stadaconans to trade in furs, the French colonists failed to turn the opportunity into one that could have provided crucial funds and provisions for Charlesbourg-Royale and France-Roy.¹⁷⁷ In this way the French case is similar to that of the Germans in Venezuela, as sustainable economics was overlooked in favour of exploratory missions, with trade simply used as a means for survival in a harsh climate. This placed a lot of faith in continuing native hospitality, which Cartier and the French frequently undermined, therefore ensuring that the attempts to find Saguenay and Asia had to be a success.

Failure of Discovery Missions

The attitude the Welser took to sustainable commerce meant their missions of discovery had to succeed for the colony to maintain economic viability. However, through harsh climate, poor leadership, native opposition and some bad luck, the *entradas* of the Welser governors were unmitigated failures.

After his first mission of plunder and discovery had resulted in modest gold accumulation and the foundation of Maracaibo, Ambrose Alfinger embarked on a western expedition into the province of Santa Marta, which would cost him his life (See Map 2). In terms of finding gold, this was the most successful Welser mission. Even so, having accrued over twenty-thousand pesos of booty, Alfinger unwisely despatched Lieutenant Inigo de Vascuna, with only twenty-four men, to return to Coro with the riches and bring back fresh provisions and men so that the group could push further west.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately for Alfinger, Vascuna and his men got hopelessly lost on their return and, struggling through starvation and exhaustion, buried the heavy treasure under a Ceiba tree, hoping to return to collect it at a later date.¹⁷⁹ All bar one man, however, succumbed to either the elements

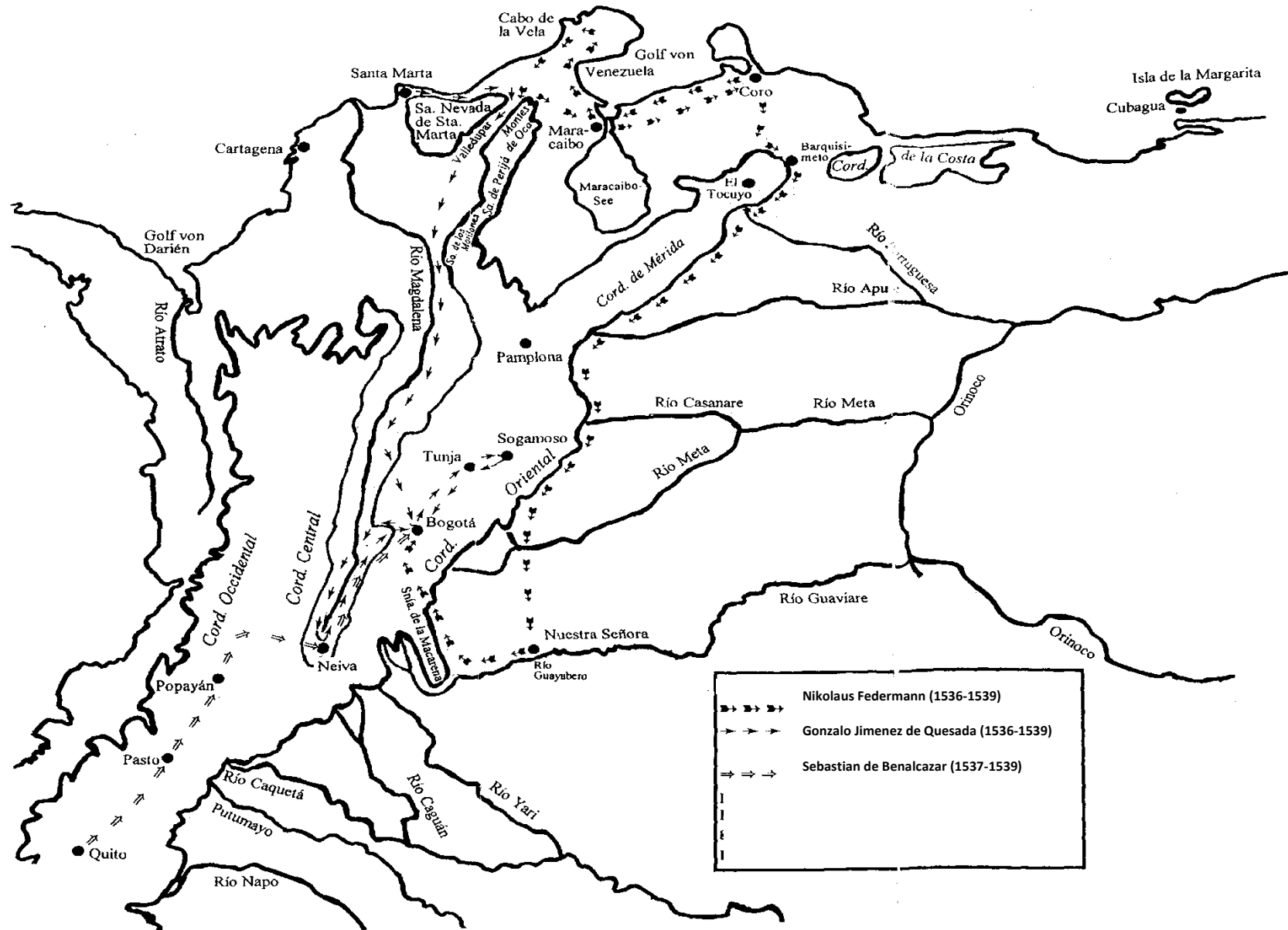
¹⁷⁵ O. Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton, 1984), pp. 81-2. Morison, *Samuel de Champlain*, p. 125

¹⁷⁶ M. Lescarbot, *Nova Francia: A description of Acadia, 1606* (Abingdon, 2005) p. 182

¹⁷⁷ Eccles, *France in America*, p. 4

¹⁷⁸ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 202-3

¹⁷⁹ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 24



Map 6: Routes taken by the Conquistadores of New Granada to reach Bogotá

Source: G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven* (Berlin, 2000), Appendix

or native attack, even resorting to cannibalism, according to Oviedo y Banos, in an attempt to survive.¹⁸⁰ The gold was never recovered and the mission of plunder and pillage that had promised a healthy reward only brought the death of the governor and a depletion of vital men and provisions for the colony, although Haebler has suggested some thirty-one thousand pesos were recovered.¹⁸¹ Around the same time, as Alfinger was leading his men west, his deputy Nikolaus Federmann had embarked south from Coro in search of the “South Sea.” Not only did he fail in this goal but Federmann’s mission managed to procure only three-thousand pesos of gold near Barquisimeto, which would not even have covered the governor’s yearly salary.¹⁸² But the biggest failure was the Hohermuth expedition, which spent three horrendous years combating native attacks and a treacherously variable climate, for the pitiful reward of five-thousand five-hundred-and-eighteen pesos.¹⁸³ Equipping the expedition with expensive horses and provisions would have cost several times that amount, and, with a survival rate of only thirty per cent, dealt a huge blow to the fortunes of the Welser colony.¹⁸⁴ A similar story can be told of the final Welser expedition led by Philipp von Hutten, which, having gained little profit in five years searching for El Dorado between 1541 and 1546 ended in Hutten’s murder at the hands of Juan de Carvajal.¹⁸⁵

The closest the Welser came to deriving great wealth from one of their missions was when Federmann’s unauthorised second expedition reached the province of Cundinamarca, the future New Granada, in 1538, at the same time as the Quesada and Benalcazar missions (See Map 6).¹⁸⁶ Jurisdiction was ultimately handed to Santa Marta amidst severe dispute, and New Granada yielded an initial 246,972 pesos to the fortunate benefactors.¹⁸⁷ Ironically, Ambrose Alfinger had been a mere ten miles away from the rich centre of Cundinamarca as early as 1532 but had failed to push on and potentially claim all the wealth for the Welser and Venezuela.¹⁸⁸ This was unfortunate considering the awful returns of the Welser governors in comparison to the massive gold output of New Granada, as well as the wealth acquired in other territories throughout the New World. (See Table 3) The Welser gamble failed to pay off. They sacrificed colonial development and a sustainable commercial policy in the hope of finding legendary riches and achieved little in return, ensuring the colony was a significant economic failure. (See Table 4)

¹⁸⁰ Oviedo y Baños, *Conquest and Settlement of Venezuela*, pp. 21-6

¹⁸¹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 210

¹⁸² Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, p. 43

¹⁸³ Bandelier, *The Gilded Man*, p. 53

¹⁸⁴ See: Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, pp. 500-1 for cost of horses in the New World.

¹⁸⁵ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, p. 180

¹⁸⁶ From Santa Marta and Quito respectively

¹⁸⁷ Bandelier, *The Gilded Man*, p. 31

¹⁸⁸ Oviedo y Baños, *Conquest and Settlement of Venezuela*, p. 24

Source of Wealth	Jurisdiction	Wealth Yielded (pesos)
Venezuela Missions	Welser Venezuela	39,917
New Granada Conquest	Santa Marta	246,976
Mexican Mines (1533-1553)	New Spain	1,355,793
Potosi Mines (1545-1564)	Peru	641,250,000
Atahualpa Ransom	Peru	3,838,508

Table 3: Revenue derived from New World gold/silver sources
Source: K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903); A.F.A. Bandelier, *The Gilded Man* (New York, 1893)

Object of Revenue	Revenue (in pesos)	Notes
Fines	333	
Slaves	7,500	
Precious Metals	6,166	
Customs Tax	2,730	
Expeditions	39,917	Highest Estimate
Total	56,646	

Object of Expenditure	Expenditure (in pesos)	Notes
Governor Salary	4,000	
Captain-General Salary	2,000	
Other Royal Salaries	10,400	
Credit Loans	60,000	According to the Welser in 1540, this figure was closer to 92,000 pesos
Total	76,400	Could be as high as 108,400

Table 4: Estimated Welser accounts of 1542 – Covering the period 1529-1542. Exact figures are wanting.
Source: K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903) pp.287-8; G. Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven* (Berlin, 2000) pp.708-9, 730-2; J. Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft in Sudamerika* (Munich, 2005) p.160

The pursuit of mineral wealth had always been one of Cartier's objectives in Canada. As early as his first voyage Francois had hoped to find, "countries where it is said that a great abundance of gold and other precious things is to be found."¹⁸⁹ This hope was vindicated in Cartier's eyes with the discovery in 1541 of the fool's gold and iron pyrites, which the master navigator "esteemed to be Diamants...[and] gold as thicke as a mans nayle".¹⁹⁰ However, in terms of the discovery missions initiated by Cartier and Roberval up the St. Lawrence, the results were as disappointing as those of the Welser. Not only were the two leaders prevented from continuing their pursuit of the search for

¹⁸⁹ 'Grant of Money to Cartier for his First Voyage' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p.

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¹⁹⁰ Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', p. 101

the Kingdom of Saguenay by impassable rapids, but they acquired little else as compensation.¹⁹¹ As mentioned, the French refrained from plundering native settlements. Whilst praiseworthy, such a tactic may have at least provided them with increased food provisions, if not riches. As D.B. Quinn has noted, “the French were the least concerned with disrupting and taking over native territory,” with even the seventeenth-century colonists preferring to ally with native groups against others, rather than conquer vast swathes of land.¹⁹² This may be because Cartier and his successors saw few overt signs that the Canadian natives possessed the wealth so often noted amongst the Indians of Mesoamerica and South America. Additionally, given that the St. Lawrence Iroquoians were semi-sedentary, moving from “place to place” to find food¹⁹³, any conquest would have yielded few structural benefits for French colonisation, as they would not be building on already established settlements. Consequently, the best-case scenario for the French was to find a rich province, similar to New Granada, which they could claim for the French crown and use as a base for further colonial development. This explains both the determination to reach Saguenay, despite a lack of proof of its existence, and the prolonged objective of finding a new route to the Far East. Seen in these terms, Cartier and Roberval failed completely, without showing the same determination and endurance the Welser governors had shown in traversing hundreds of miles of the Venezuelan interior, yet while still increasing the pressure on an already under-prepared colonial attempt.

Communication Networks

Communication

The variable terrain encountered by the German governors in Venezuela on their lengthy *entradas*, and the lack of existing European knowledge of the interior of the province, made communication with Coro and Maracaibo a constant problem. We have seen how Ambrose Alfinger’s prolonged absence on his first mission, without word of him in Coro, had resulted in Georg Ehinger’s and Hans Seissenhofer’s attempted usurpation of command, which brought conflict with the appointed Spanish councillors of the settlement. Further problems were caused by the absence of communication in the mid-1530s when the whereabouts of neither Governor Hohermuth nor his

¹⁹¹ B.G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: a history of the Huron people to 1660* (Montreal, 1976) pp. 204-7

¹⁹² Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies*, p. 133. C.E. Heidenreich, ‘The Beginning of French Exploration out of the St. Lawrence Valley: Motives, Methods, and Changing Attitudes Towards Native People’ in G. Warkentin & C. Podruchny (eds.), *Decentring the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in multidisciplinary perspective 1500-1700* (Toronto; Buffalo; London, 2001) p. 241

¹⁹³ ‘Roberval’s Voyage, 1542-3’, p. 111

deputy Federmann was known, during a period of impoverishment in the towns of the province.¹⁹⁴ Dr. Navarro was sent to conduct a *residencia* of the Welser colony in 1538 because “it is not known if [Hohermuth and Federmann] are alive or dead”.¹⁹⁵ Unsurprisingly, the failure of the Welser governors to communicate their whereabouts and well-being during their interior missions created a power vacuum within Coro where different parties sought rule. Whilst this situation was tempered by the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo’s appointment of Bishop Rodrigo de Bastidas as interim governor on three occasions – 1534, 1538 and 1540 – it eventually had dire consequences.¹⁹⁶ The lengthy absence of Philipp von Hutten after 1541 resulted in the Council of the Indies sending Licentiate Tolosa to Coro in 1545 to “abide in justice to those complainers” who had been deprived of their appointed leader for so long.¹⁹⁷ However, before Tolosa arrived in Venezuela, rogue captain Juan de Carvajal had finally usurped power, transplanted the population from Coro to Tucuyo, creating an unsanctioned settlement that culminated in the murder of Hutten and his deputy Bartholomaeus Welser Jr. in 1546, thus effectively ending direct German rule of the colony.¹⁹⁸

Such power struggles might have been avoided had the governors been better able to communicate their location and continued survival back to the settlements during their *entradas*. Furthermore, the problems of communication occurred in the opposite direction, as the colonists exploring the interior failed to re-supply their expeditions because of a lack of contact with Coro. Philipp von Hutten wondered in a letter to a friend “how the human body could have tolerated so long” the “vexations” and “hardships” of the Hohermuth expedition, which remained constantly short of provisions.¹⁹⁹ Even though Hohermuth had sent a number of sick men back to Coro under Sancho de Murga to request new supplies for his group, their inability to pinpoint the location of the *entrada* meant help never arrived and the governor and his men were forced to plunder native settlements, causing themselves problems for the future.²⁰⁰

The link between communication networks and provisions related to the settlements as much as the expeditions. As noted, the Welser sent few ships to Venezuela from the Old World during their period of control, making it difficult to communicate the desires of the Company’s leaders for the colony. However, Götz Simmer has highlighted that “almost no ships” of any

¹⁹⁴ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 192

¹⁹⁵ ‘Que el doctor Navarro deshaga todo lo que haya dispuesto en Venezuela’ in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, p. 63

¹⁹⁶ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 217, 300-1

¹⁹⁷ ‘Nombramiento del licenciado Juan Perez de Tolosa como juez de residencia de Venezuela’ in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, p. 150

¹⁹⁸ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, pp. 183-7

¹⁹⁹ ‘Philipp von Hutten an den Kaiserlichen Rat Matthias Zimmermann: Brief aus Coro vom 30 Juli/30 Oktober 1538’ in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 98

²⁰⁰ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, pp. 36, 47

description came to Coro during the 1530s because of its assumed lack of profitability.²⁰¹ This means that even communication with their trading post on Hispaniola would have been difficult for the Welser settlers, which as we have seen, was crucial in re-supplying the colony's basic needs.

The French were not as hampered by communication networks within Canada, as the Germans were within Venezuela. Unlike the unpredictable rivers of the South American interior, the St. Lawrence was suitable for traversing great distances in a short time. When heading off in search of Saguenay, Cartier and his men covered the approximately one-hundred-and-sixty miles between Stadacona and the "Saults" beyond Hochelaga in a mere four days.²⁰² It had taken Hohermuth's mission over two and a half years to traverse roughly 1,864 miles south of Coro, an average of three miles per day, in comparison to the forty per day negotiated by Cartier on the St. Lawrence.²⁰³ Although frozen for a few winter months each year, Cartier and Roberval had access to a navigable waterway in the St. Lawrence, which offered good communication between their settlements at Cap-Rouge and potential downstream resources.

The real communication problem for the French was with the Old World, on which they were solely reliant for any additional provisions and manpower. This was a problem confronting all new nations bidding to establish colonies in the New World, including the Spanish. However, the Spaniards quick population of the Caribbean and establishment of administrative and judicial structures on Hispaniola meant they soon severed total reliance on the Old World.²⁰⁴ The French, as we know, could not send such vast numbers out to Canada and had no established presence in the New World, meaning all essential communication with their patrons required a lengthy two-way sea passage. In this respect the French were less fortunate than the Welser, who could at least theoretically relay messages to their factors in Santo Domingo, far closer in proximity than mainland Europe. The difficulty of communication between New World and Old undoubtedly hampered the French in terms of re-provisioning and recruitment and yet again highlights their lack of preparedness in taking so little on their colonial voyages in terms of supplies and manpower.

²⁰¹ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 190

²⁰² Cartier, 'Cartier's Third Voyage, 1541', pp. 102-3

²⁰³ Hemming, *Search for El Dorado*, p. 63

²⁰⁴ J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven; London, 2006), pp. 52, 123

Transportation

Linked to re-provisioning were transportation networks, which were undeveloped on European arrival. Vascuna's failure to return to Coro with Alfinger's gold in 1532, and attain the necessary provisions to continue the mission successfully, was due to the lack of roads and the failure to map or chart the course taken from Maracaibo the year before. Whilst Vascuna and his men got lost, the rest of the expedition returning under Pedro de San Martin the following year took only two weeks to make the same journey, arriving safely in Maracaibo, and highlighting the role both chance and personal orienteering ability played in negotiating unknown routes.²⁰⁵

Nevertheless, a form of indigenous road system did exist within the province of Venezuela. Spencer and Raymond have shown how pre-hispanic causeways were used to link one indigenous polity to another, preventing the natives from having to negotiate the often flooded and marshy plains of the interior.²⁰⁶ Whilst these *calzadas* were not merely used for transportation, they undoubtedly "would have greatly facilitated the interchange of goods and information between the regional centre and the local elites."²⁰⁷ There is, however, no mention in any of the accounts of the Welser colonists using these *calzadas* to their own advantage. Indeed, the Welser record for road-building in Venezuela is appalling and no effort was made to create a suitable transportation network. Friede has argued that there were no roads in Venezuela as of 1546, but by 1570, once under Spanish control, a sophisticated system existed, linking Venezuela to the surrounding provinces.²⁰⁸

This failure to facilitate transportation is particularly surprising given the Welser reliance on the horse for carrying gold and provisions, as well as for military campaigns against the natives, who "were very frightened because they had never before seen horses", according to Federmann.²⁰⁹ Both Federmann and Von Hutten highlight the difficulties confronting the horses on their expeditions, as they were not suited to the mountainous and flooded terrain often traversed.²¹⁰ The mortality rate of the horses on missions was high, meaning fewer provisions could be carried to sustain the explorers, creating a vicious cycle in which the horses were themselves killed as a food source for the starving Europeans.²¹¹ Ultimately, the difficulty of transporting goods and booty via horses contributed to the failure of the missions that were so important to the economy of the Welser colony, and huge capital outlay was required to buy more horses for subsequent exploration. By

²⁰⁵ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, pp. 29-30

²⁰⁶ C.S. Spencer & E.M. Redmond, 'Prehispanic Causeways and Regional Politics in the Llanos of Barinas, Venezuela', *Latin American Antiquity*, Volume 9(2) (1998) pp. 95-97

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105

²⁰⁸ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 528

²⁰⁹ Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, p. 19. (Original: "waren sehr erschrocken, denn sie hatten noch niemals vorher Pferde.")

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18. "Newe Zeytung" in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 60

²¹¹ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 45

failing to make use of existing indigenous systems or to build their own transportation networks, the Welser colonists hampered the success of their interior missions and supply to their settlements.

Whilst the St. Lawrence would have offered an adequate means of transporting goods to the French forts at Cap-Rouge, the lack of documentary evidence means we cannot be sure whether Cartier and Roberval attempted to acquire provisions from further downriver. What does appear clear is that the French colonists never sought to explore the interior landmass of Canada, which whilst it may have brought similar transportation problems to that of the Welser, could have proved more profitable for their settlements. Cartier noted in the account of his second voyage how the natives of Stadacona went to “hunt stags and other animals” and that they returned with “fresh meat, venison, and all varieties of fresh fish.”²¹² During the seventeenth century, French settlers in Canada exploited these natural resources through exhaustive hunting and fishing which allowed them “to spend the winters without succumbing to scurvy” or starvation.²¹³ Yet, neither the Cartier nor Roberval colonists appear to have attempted a similar feat, which could have proved equally beneficial. It is probable that Cartier’s familiarity with water-borne travel meant routes other than the St. Lawrence were ignored and the French became over-reliant on one transportation network.

The failure of the ambitious exploratory missions that obsessed the Welser and French leaders, unaided by poor communication and transportation networks that they failed to rectify, ensured the economic viability of Venezuela and Canada became further undermined. Rather than pursue sustainable commerce they persisted with wild treasure-hunts despite no reasonable evidence of wealth, once more showing their lack of foresight in preparing for colonisation.

²¹² Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Second Voyage, 1535-6’, p. 81

²¹³ J.A. Dickinson, ‘Champlain, Administrator’ in R. Litalien & D. Vaugeois (eds.), *Champlain: the birth of French America* (Montreal, 2004) p. 215

Chapter 3: Foreign Relations

As well as their own preparedness, the Welser and French presence in the New World was largely dependent on foreign relations, given that few of their countrymen had yet made the crossing from Europe. The Spanish had for some time used the *Inter Cetera* papal bull to claim jurisdiction over all the New World territories and they did not appreciate any potential intruders. But it was not only relations with the Spanish that helped determine the success of the new colonial attempts; the role of the indigenous peoples of the Americas was of paramount importance as well. They offered the key to surviving hostile and alien climates for the Europeans, providing food and, perhaps the most important commodity, labour. However, neither the Welser nor French were able to maintain amicable relations with Spaniard or native.

Spanish Relations

Right of Settlement

The Welser rights to colonise the province of Venezuela were dependent on the patronage of Emperor Charles V, who himself was reliant on Welser finance for his own New World ventures. Whilst it was a move undoubtedly not appreciated by many of his Spanish subjects, Charles' loyalties were not simply to Spain. He was the Holy Roman Emperor, who commanded much of present-day Germany, and who rarely lived in Spain, preferring the German territories and Flanders where he had been educated.²¹⁴ Therefore, it would be careless to suggest that all Spaniards shared his New World vision. Indeed, within the first few years of Welser settlement in Venezuela, the majority Spanish population showed clear dissent towards German rule, culminating in severe civil strife by 1533. During his long absence on his second *entrada*, Ambrose Alfinger had appointed Bartolomé de Santillana as his deputy in Coro, who fiercely looked after Welser interests, as well as his own, in a dictatorial manner.²¹⁵ He forbade anyone to leave the city walls, rationed food at high prices, hoarded water for his close cadre of supporters and imposed brutal discipline in which the settlers were "treated worse than Moors".²¹⁶ Santillana's appointment by, and association with, Alfinger, only led to further questions over the right of Germans to rule a "Spanish territory" and resulted in factional dispute between Welser supporters and those of the Spanish Crown, which some historians

²¹⁴ M. Fernandez Alvarez, *Charles V: elected emperor and hereditary ruler* (London, 1975) p. 125

²¹⁵ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 212

²¹⁶ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, pp. 193-97

have termed a “revolution”.²¹⁷ Certainly, Santillana’s subsequent arrest by the citizens of Coro, during the period between Alfinger’s death and Hohermuth’s appointment, saw the first serious revolt against the Welser leadership and undermined their position in the colony from that point onwards.

Settlement disputes between the Welser and Spanish were not restricted to rights of governance, but also related to territory. The lack of geographical knowledge regarding the South American interior by 1530 meant the capitulations for the governor’s of each province set only northern limits to their territory.²¹⁸ This encouraged settlers from neighbouring provinces to conduct expeditions to unknown lands and claim them as part of their own colony, unsurprisingly leading to conflict. As a result, the royal documents relating to the New World are littered with territorial disputes, many involving the Welser with the neighbouring territories of Santa Marta and Cartagena. By 1536, as the population of the South American colonies began to increase, Nikolaus Federmann complained to the Crown of the “damage the settlers and conquerors of Santa Marta” had made in Venezuela.²¹⁹ Just two months before Federmann’s complaint, a neighbouring official had “called for a ban on the German people at Cabo de la Vela and not to enter the valley of Pacabuey, said to belong to the governorship of Santa Marta”.²²⁰ These conflicting claims made it difficult for the Welser to maintain amicable relations with the surrounding Spanish colonies, particularly as the decisions of the royal authorities tended to go against the German governorship. As seen, the pearl fisheries of Cabo de la Vela were transferred to Santa Martan control, despite being included as Venezuelan territory in Welser capitulations.²²¹ More significant was the sole award of the prosperous Cundinamarca (New Granada) to Santa Marta, despite Nikolaus Federmann’s claim on behalf of Venezuela and his support of Jimenez de Quesada’s conquest of the inhabitant Chibcha Kingdom (See Map 6).²²² Federmann, along with Quesada and Sebastian de Benalcazar (who had claimed the territory for Cartagena) had returned to Spain in 1539 to press their claims in front of the Council of the Indies.²²³ Quesada and his brother had recognised Federmann as an equal

²¹⁷ One of the most prominent historians is Ramos Perez, who called the period the “revolution of Coro against the Welser”. Manuel Vicente Magallanes labelled it the “first manifestation of collective rebellion on American soil” and Anibal Pena Hill suggested it was a “civil and military move...against foreign domination”. In Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, pp. 239-40

²¹⁸ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 513

²¹⁹ ‘Respuesta a una carta del gobernador Nicolas Federman’ [20/11/1536] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, p. 48

²²⁰ ‘Fragmento de la carta de la Audiencia de Santo Domingo sobre asuntos del gobierno’ [12/2/1536] in Friede (ed.), *Documentos Inéditos*, vol. 4, p. 57. (Original: “pidió que se prohibiese el poblar de los Alemanes en el cabo de la Vela y que no entrasen por el valle de Pacabuey, diciendo pertenecer a la gobernación de Santa Marta.”)

²²¹ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, pp. 182-3

²²² D. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: a nation in spite of itself* (Berkeley; London, 1993) pp. 8-10

²²³ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 259-62

conqueror of Cundinamarca in an agreement of the same year, suggesting that “his Majesty shall command to divide the New Kingdom to the conquistadores” and promising Federmann great personal rewards.²²⁴ Furthermore, several Spanish settlers questioned on the jurisdiction of New Granada suggested they were unsure of which province it lay closest to.²²⁵ Nevertheless, by December 1540, the Council of the Indies were commanding the governors of Cartagena and Venezuela “not to intrude into the said province of New Granada”, which had been awarded to Santa Marta.²²⁶

Not only did this decision serve to undermine the Welser colony in relation to Santa Marta but it led to more infighting within the German company. Although Federmann had made the claim that New Granada was in Venezuelan territory, Oviedo suggested this was due to personal motives, as Federmann had long hoped to be governor of the Welser province in the future.²²⁷ However, his lack of communication with the Welser authorities regarding his claim, and his unilateral decision to return to Spain to campaign for it, increased Company suspicions about a man they had previously revoked the governorship from on moral grounds.²²⁸ Consequently, on his return to Europe in August 1540, Federmann was detained in a Flanders prison for supposedly embezzling over twenty-thousand ducats owed to the Welser from the Cundinamarca conquest.²²⁹ However, during the subsequent interrogation, Federmann counter-claimed that the Welser owed two-hundred-thousand ducats to the Spanish Crown, as a result of not paying the royal fifth on numerous commodities since the inception of the colony, shortly after he was barred from the governorship again.²³⁰ Whilst it is obvious from what we know of the colony’s finances that this was nothing but a vindictive lie, it permanently damaged the Welser reputation in Spain and set off a series of legal proceedings that would end with the revocation of their contract in 1556, despite Federmann’s deathbed retraction in 1542.²³¹

²²⁴ ‘Concierto hecho entre el licenciado Jiménez de Quesada y Nicolás Federman’ [29/4/1539] in Friede (ed.), *Documentos Inéditos*, vol.5, pp. 156-7. (Original: “Su Majestad mandare repartir este dicho Nuevo Reino a los conquistadores.”)

²²⁵ ‘Fragmentos del pleito entre los gobernadores de Venezuela, Panama, Santa Marta y Cartagena, sobre la jurisdicción del Nuevo Reino de Granada’ in Ibid., pp. 300-2

²²⁶ ‘Real cedula a todos los gobernadores y justicias de las Indias, comunicándoles que el Nuevo Reino se pone bajo la jurisdicción de Santa Marta en tanto se resuelve el pleito que sobre ello pende en el Consejo.’ [10/12/1540] in Friede (ed.), *Documentos Inéditos*, vol. 6, pp. 67-68. (Original: “no vos entremetieseis a entrar en la dicha provincia del Nuevo Reino de Granada.”)

²²⁷ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, pp. 52-3

²²⁸ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 238

²²⁹ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, p. 161

²³⁰ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 370. See: ‘Revocación del nombramiento de Nicolás Federman como gobernador de Venezuela’, in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, pp. 97-8

²³¹ J. Friede, *Nicolas Federman: conquistador de Venezuela, 1506-1542* (Caracas, 1959), p. 62

Unlike the Welser, the French were certainly not the recipients of any patronage from Charles V, the long-term enemy of Francois I. Furthermore, as a staunch Catholic, Francois needed a way to placate the Pope from opposing his colonisation plans, which went against the *Inter Cetera* papal bull of 1493 that had divided the lands of the New World between Spain and Portugal.²³² Francois therefore hinted at the importance of evangelization in any French colony in Canada, testified to by his 1541 commission to Roberval.²³³ Whilst not sincere, this move would have made it harder for Pope Paul III to side with Charles V, as the French offered thousands of potential converts to the Catholic Church.²³⁴ This did not prevent Charles from being concerned that the French would use any colonial settlement in North America as a launch-pad for attacks against his own New World territories or his ships, laden with riches, crossing the Atlantic.²³⁵ This fear is evident from a letter sent by Charles to the Cardinal of Toledo in November 1540, in which the Emperor expresses his anger at the French “contravention of the treaty” that had ended their previous war and emphasises the importance of spying on the colonial preparations so that if necessary a Spanish fleet “may be speedily formed...to resist and destroy them”.²³⁶ There was also, no doubt, concern amongst the Spanish authorities that Cartier may find a Western route to Asia through North America or find riches in Canada comparable to those of New Spain. A Spanish spy report of April 1541 suggests Cartier was heading to Canada to search for mines of precious metals and that the mariner was “informed by the same savages that there is a great quantity of them”.²³⁷ Such reports, and Spanish knowledge of French preparations, ensured the colonial attempt was to be constantly monitored and gave the French a vulnerable starting point in their New World endeavours.

Direct Interference

The dispute over rights of settlement was certainly one cause of increased Spanish interference in the Welser colony. However, perhaps more significant was the inefficient governance of the Germans and their deputies, particularly during the first few years after 1529, when colonial development was ignored in favour of exploration. The death of Alfinger and the Santillana incident gave the Spanish authorities in Santo Domingo a good excuse to intervene in the province, as they

²³² L.C. Green & O.P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton, 1989) pp. 4-7

²³³ ‘Roberval’s Commission’, pp. 144-5

²³⁴ Morison, *The European Discovery of America*, p. 435

²³⁵ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, p. 23

²³⁶ ‘The Emperor to the Cardinal of Toledo’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. 141. Numerous other letters of correspondence between the Emperor and the Cardinal, expressing similar sentiments, are available in Biggar’s *Collection of Documents*

²³⁷ ‘Secret Report on Cartier’s Expedition: Report by a Spanish Spy on Jacques Cartier’s Preparations’, p. 152

were sent to mediate the civil strife.²³⁸ In 1534, as part of this mediation, Bishop Bastidas was appointed as interim governor, whilst the Welser tried to find a successor to Alfinger.²³⁹ This began a period of greater direct interference from Santo Domingo and Madrid in the governance of Venezuela, as the Welser role became less and less prominent in the administration of the colony. Firstly, the Spanish authorities began to appoint their own officials directly to council posts in Coro and Maracaibo, rather than simply approve Welser appointments.²⁴⁰ Secondly, they took responsibility for hearing civil and criminal cases for the province in Santo Domingo, even though a *cabildo* (town council) existed in Coro for such purposes.²⁴¹ Furthermore, they tried to appoint Bastidas as permanent governor during Hohermuth's trip to the interior in 1538, without seemingly consulting the Welser hierarchy.²⁴² These moves were unsurprising given the long absences of the Welser governors and the neglect of their duties to colonial settlement. Nevertheless, not all interference in the province was aimed at removing power from the Welser. The *Audiencia* intervened to ensure royal salaries were paid on several occasions.²⁴³ Additionally, in 1535, they recovered four brigantines paid for by the Welser that had been recalled to Hispaniola by wary officials in Santa Marta.²⁴⁴ They even gave strict orders forbidding armed men of neighbouring provinces from entering Venezuela, in order to protect Welser interests.²⁴⁵ However, the failure of the Welser to show any reciprocal gesture, whilst continuing to ignore the development of the colony, encouraged the Spanish authorities to further erode their power.

Their method of doing this was through the appointment of *residencias*, "the normal form of judicial inquiry into the activities of servants of the crown against whom complaints had been lodged".²⁴⁶ The first such body was licensed under Dr. Navarro, who in May 1538 presented the returned Hohermuth with a series of allegations against the Welser governance of Venezuela.²⁴⁷ These allegations included food hoarding, excessive discipline against the Spanish settlers, brutality towards the native population, and the appointment of unsuitable deputies without official

²³⁸ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 232

²³⁹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 217-218

²⁴⁰ For example see: 'Nombramiento de Juan de Frias como regidor de Maracaibo' [11/12/1534] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, p. 200

²⁴¹ 'Que el gobernador y justicias de Venezuela cumplan y hagan cumplir el orden sobre las apelaciones en lo civil/criminal' [12/7/1531] Ibid, pp. 102-104

²⁴² 'Respuesta a una carta de Rodrigo de Bastidas' [8/11/1538] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, pp. 81-84

²⁴³ 'Que los oficiales de Venezuela paguen a los Welser todos los salarios atrasados' [6/2/1535] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, p. 252

²⁴⁴ 'Que los oficiales de Venezuela devulevan a los Welser los derechos indebidamente cobrados por 4 bergantines' [22/1/1535] in Ibid., p. 233

²⁴⁵ 'Prohibición de hacer armadas a Venezuela y que salgan los intrusos' [13/11/1534] in Ibid., pp. 174-5

²⁴⁶ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 123

²⁴⁷ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 410

authorisation.²⁴⁸ Whilst justified, Navarro insisted that the Welser family themselves take responsibility for their officials' actions, as well as Governor Hohermuth.²⁴⁹ Although this decision appears slightly unfair, it is testament to the failure of the Welser and their appointed leaders to oversee the daily affairs of the colony.

The second significant *residencia* was commissioned for Licenciado Juan de Frias in 1544. As Frias was also due to oversee the provinces of Margarita and Cubagua, he sent Juan de Carvajal to begin proceedings in Venezuela.²⁵⁰ As we know, Carvajal used the opportunity to usurp power from the Welser and murder Philipp von Hutten and Bartholomaeus Welser Jr., the last two German representatives in the colony, in 1546, in what was a very direct act of Spanish interference. This did not prevent Frias from blaming the impoverished nature of the colony solely on the Welser, although the *residencia* of Licenciado Tolosa the following year at least placed some of the blame at the hands of the Spanish. Indeed, Tolosa recognised that there were so few permanent settlers left in Venezuela that they could not elaborate on the accusations levelled against the Welser.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, the years of increasing Spanish interference and inefficient German governance meant that from 1545 the Welser and their representatives were vigorously defending their rights to preserve the colony at the Council of the Indies.²⁵² After several years of allegations and counter-claims, the Welser were finally found guilty of having failed to fulfil the obligations of their capitulation and the colony was officially transferred to Spanish governorship in 1556.²⁵³

In the French case, despite Charles V's orders to destroy any foreign fleets heading to establish a New World colony, there is no indication that this ever occurred. Certainly, a Spanish fisherman present in Newfoundland during the short lifespan of the Canadian colony testified that he had seen no Spanish ships in any of the local harbours.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the clear concern of the Spanish, and also the Portuguese, regarding French colonial plans is evident from the documents.²⁵⁵ Had the Cap-Rouge settlement lasted longer than a mere two years, the Iberians might have taken direct action, as the Portuguese later did in Brazil and the Spanish in Florida, both against French colonies.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 411

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 411, 416

²⁵⁰ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 388

²⁵¹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, p. 376

²⁵² Haebler offers an excellent review of these procedures which shed further light on the Welser failure to establish a permanent and sustainable settlement. See Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 368-397

²⁵³ Ibid., pp. 380-90

²⁵⁴ 'Examination of Newfoundland Sailors Regarding Cartier', p.162

²⁵⁵ For Portuguese see: 'Letter from Lagarto to John the Third, King of Portugal' in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, pp. 130-33

The greatest direct interference, however, occurred in Europe with the start of the Fourth Italian War between the French and the Habsburgs and their allies in July 1542, shortly after Roberval's departure for Canada.²⁵⁶ For a colony that was always going to be reliant on re-supply from the Old World, this was a disastrous event, as the few remaining funds of the French treasury were diverted towards the war effort. Furthermore, not only had Roberval just left for Canada, but Cartier was returning, arriving at Saint-Malo in September 1542 just as the French offensive gathered momentum and as Francois attempted to put down the "*gabelle* revolt" against his controversial salt tax.²⁵⁷ It would be unsurprising if the Canadian colony was the least of Francois' concerns at this moment. Therefore, if Cartier had returned to France to acquire more supplies, as a Spanish sailor believed he had, his chances of success would have been severely undermined.²⁵⁸ Any possibility of the colony being re-provisioned after the Roberval mission was effectively nullified by the ongoing war, which saw peace finally agreed in 1546.²⁵⁹

The French did not suffer the same level of direct Spanish interference as the Welser in the New World, largely because the short existence of their Canadian colony prevented Old World hostilities from being carried to the New, as would happen later in the century. Although the Welser were theoretically better supported by the Spanish in their colonial enterprise, as a result of their patronage from Charles V, the obvious hostility the Spanish settlers had to any other nationality encroaching on "their" land is clear to see. The suspicions of the Old World, during a period of religious dissent and stateless nations, coupled with the Welser's poor governing performance, ensured that ultimately they would be removed by their Spanish overlords. The ability of the Spaniards to populate and develop the New World quickly during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries made any intrusion by foreign powers, patronised or otherwise, an unlikely possibility during this period.

²⁵⁶ G.C. Kohn, *Dictionary of Wars, Third Edition* (New York, 2007) pp. 261-2

²⁵⁷ The *gabelle* revolt, named after the salt tax, gripped several French commercial towns, particularly La Rochelle, during 1541 and 1542. R.J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: the reign of Francis I* (Cambridge, 1994) pp. 480-2

²⁵⁸ 'Examination of Newfoundland Sailors Regarding Cartier', p.165

²⁵⁹ R.J. Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610* 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2001) pp. 182-5

Native Relations

Unlike with the Spanish, the contact between the arriving Europeans and the natives of the New World was an unexpected and monumental clash of cultures and belief systems that the majority found difficult to accept. For the Europeans, they were forced to reconcile these “beings” with their ancient world-view that all men were descended from Noah.²⁶⁰ For the natives themselves, they had to try and defend their freedom and cultures against armed invaders. Therefore, the relationship between these two groups played an important part in early New World colonies, as each group tried to use the other for their own survival and benefit. The Spanish created a network of laws to protect the natives in theory²⁶¹; yet in reality, they undermined them through false claims of civilisation and evangelisation, incorporating the natives into *encomienda* systems, whereby they were forced to offer tribute and labour to the colonists.²⁶² Whilst an often brutal and fatal ploy against the natives, it allowed the Spaniards to maintain a regular supply of labour in most of their colonies. However, neither the Welser nor French colonists could enact a suitable native policy. Despite a heavy reliance on their production capabilities, the Europeans failed to control the indigenous inhabitants in their territories and ultimately alienated them from compliant help.

Reliance on the Natives

The first Welser colonists arrived in Coro to a peaceful native population of Caquetio-Indians, which had been befriended by Juan de Ampies during his time in the province.²⁶³ Although some remained sceptical of European peoples as a result of the slave-raids that had persisted on the Venezuelan coast in the first three decades of the century, they remained hospitable.²⁶⁴ The Caquetio had lived on the northern coast of Venezuela for several centuries and had adapted to the dry, barren land surrounding Coro by creating irrigation methods, which enabled stable food

²⁶⁰ See: M. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964) pp. 207-253

²⁶¹ The Laws of Burgos of December 1512 recognised that the American natives were free subjects of the Spanish crown, yet needed European guidance for their own benefit. The Laws decreed they should spend nine months a year in Spanish service, in which time they could learn to properly govern themselves. This helped facilitate the *encomienda* system. Furthermore, in the following year, 1513, the controversial “Requirement” was drawn up. It was supposed to be read to native populations before Spanish attacks, giving them the chance to surrender freely to the Spanish Crown before conquest. Unsurprisingly, given language differences, the “Requirement” was abused by the Spaniards, who used it as legal justification for conquest. L. Hanke (ed.), *History of Latin American Civilization: sources and interpretations* (2nd ed.) (Boston, 1973) pp. 93-96

²⁶² See: L.N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700* (Minneapolis, 1984) p. 157

²⁶³ Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, pp. 69-70

²⁶⁴ Bandelier, *The Gilded Man*, p. 8

production.²⁶⁵ As we know, the Welser sent few provisions for much of their tenure, with hardly any ships arriving from either Europe or Santo Domingo, and settlers unwilling to work the land. As a result, their reliance on the native Caquetio for food was extremely high and a law to protect them was introduced in 1530.²⁶⁶ The rejection of Ambrose Alfinger's appeal against this ordinance by the *Audiencia* in Santo Domingo suggests a degree of sincerity in the protection of the natives.²⁶⁷

However, the Venezuelan inhabitants were not just important to the settlements of Coro and Maracaibo but also to the discovery expeditions undertaken. Firstly, they were essential as porters of European provisions and weaponry through the harsh terrain of the interior. This is evident from Philipp von Hutten's account, as the Europeans were forced to put "two caciques in chains" so they would "give us Indians to carry our goods".²⁶⁸ Secondly, the Europeans relied on food supplied by native groups they encountered, either being given it or taking it by force. Oviedo exclaimed that the Europeans resorted to "eating roots and fruit from trees" when they traversed through uninhabited areas.²⁶⁹ Additionally, Nikolaus Federmann's relief is evident in the account of his first exploration when his men, suffering "abundant hunger", saw "rising smoke from the surrounding mountains", which suggested native pueblos and a potential food source.²⁷⁰ Thirdly, the explorers required native peoples to act as interpreters for them as they encountered unfamiliar tribes further inside the continent. They were important in trying to cement good relations between the Europeans and various tribal groups and, if necessary, asking for food and directions to wealthy lands. The importance of amiable native-European relations in the Welser colony is obvious, as their whole settlement and economic base relied on native manpower and ingenuity. It is clear to see how a failure to preserve good relations could jeopardise the colony as a whole.

Whilst it is certain that the Caquetio had encountered Europeans before the Welser arrival, it is not clear whether the St. Lawrence Iroquoians of Canada had done so before Cartier's visit in 1534. The Micmac of the Gulf of St. Lawrence would have been familiar with European fishermen since the beginning of the century and had engaged in fruitful barter for metal goods.²⁷¹ Dickason has postulated that the Iroquoians of Stadacona also spent their summer months in the Gulf fishing,

²⁶⁵ N.L. Whitehead, *Histories and Historicities in Amazonia* (Lincoln, 2003) pp. 185-6

²⁶⁶ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, pp. 545-6

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 545

²⁶⁸ "'Neue Zeytung'" in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, pp. 58-9. (Original: "zweien andere Casiquo in einer Ketten mit... uns Indianer zu geben, unsern Blunder zu tragen.")

²⁶⁹ Oviedo y Valdes, *Historia*, vol. 3, p. 49

²⁷⁰ Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, pp. 48-9

²⁷¹ A.G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700: a study in Canadian civilization* (Toronto, 1969) p. 5

which meant they too would have had experience of European contact.²⁷² This is important, as it would have allowed the Iroquoians to understand the particularities of barter with the Europeans, what they prized in particular, and how to get a good deal for themselves. These factors would play out on all of Cartier's voyages, including the colonial attempt. The Stadaconans had in abundance one thing the Europeans did not: nutritious food. In 1606 Marc Lescarbot noted that "they of Canada and Hochelaga" tilled with such efficiency that "the land did afford them corn, beans, peas, millions, pompions and cucumbers", most of which could be stored.²⁷³ By his second voyage, which involved nearly a year's stay near Stadacona, Cartier had become reliant on these and other native food sources to feed his men²⁷⁴, which involved trading his own wares.²⁷⁵ Unlike newly-encountered native groups, which offered food as a sign of hospitality, the Stadaconan's experience of European trading enabled them to exact a higher price. There is no reason to believe this pattern did not continue during the colonial expedition and, indeed, archaeological evidence at the French fort shows signs of commercial exchange. The fact that the French had no prior knowledge of how to survive the Canadian climate meant they could not afford to dismiss the natives entirely. Even at a point of fractured relations during the winter of 1535-6, the natives presented Cartier with the cure for scurvy after fifty of his men had died of "marvellous and extraordinary symptoms".²⁷⁶ The procedure to make a drink rich in Vitamin C from the bark of the white cedar may have been simple; yet it was alien to the French, who without the cure would have suffered further casualties through that winter or during that experienced several years later by Cartier.²⁷⁷ As with the Welser colonists, the French required the natives of Canada as guides, leading them up the St. Lawrence they knew so well. However, as was the case with the Welser, the alienation of the natives would make them less inclined to serve the European colonial purpose.

Alienation of Natives

Despite the obvious benefits of collaborating with the natives of Venezuela, the Welser colonists carried out widespread abuse and plunder of the indigenous populace. This was not a rarity

²⁷² Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage*, p. 165; whilst it is likely that the Iroquoians were one of several ethnic groups to fish in the Gulf during the summer, not all subscribe to this view. See: C. Boucher, "'The land God gave to Cain': Jacques Cartier Encounters the Mythological Wild Man in Labrador", *Terrae Incognitae*, Volume 35(1) (2003) pp. 28-42

²⁷³ Lescarbot, *Nova Francia*, p. 296

²⁷⁴ Although archaeological evidence suggests the French had sufficient stores of European plant foods, such as wheat, barley and lentils, they would have been reliant on the natives for their fresh produce. Bouchard-Perron & Bain, 'From Myth to Reality', pp. 97-99

²⁷⁵ Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-6', p. 70

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76

²⁷⁷ B.G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "heroic age" reconsidered* (Manchester, 1986) pp. 131-2

amongst settlers in the New World. However, the Welser failure to conduct a systematic exploitation of the natives, as was common in the Spanish colonies, ensured their random targeting had only negative consequences. After a few years of seemingly peaceful cooperation between the few Europeans in Coro and the local Caquetios, Bartolome de Santillana's brutal regime as Alfinger's deputy, in which the natives were tortured, robbed and enslaved, caused an exodus of Cacique Manaure and his people into the interior by the end of 1532.²⁷⁸ Simultaneously, Alfinger was plundering his way west from Maracaibo, pillaging native settlements and enslaving any captives.²⁷⁹ His actions unsurprisingly terrified the natives he encountered, pushing them further into the hinterland, and earning Alfinger the epithet of "the cruel of the cruels" amongst the Spanish chroniclers.²⁸⁰ Alfinger enslaved the natives on a large scale, despite the ordinances against it, and despite the fact that he had brought a number of black slaves with him to the province in 1529.²⁸¹ Indeed, a *cedula* of 1534 suggests the Welser had been allowed four-thousand black slaves in the colony, ostensibly "to extract gold from the mines", and were being granted a further eight-hundred for similar purposes.²⁸² However, Friede has argued that it is likely that Alfinger sold the majority of these slaves to other New World provinces, as they fetched a higher price than the weaker Amerindians did.²⁸³ Slave-trading was the one commercial success of the Welser colony and was conducted by the majority of Coro's residents, including the clergy²⁸⁴, even though the Company itself may not have authorised it.²⁸⁵

All this plunder and enslavement simply served to diminish the labour potential of the colony. In 1536 the Council of the Indies responded angrily to the depopulation of the north coast of Venezuela, brought about by the "damage [and] displacement" caused by Nikolaus Federmann.²⁸⁶ By 1539 they were insisting that the "three or four thousand Indians" left around Coro be treated "as free people", in order to maintain some indigenous workforce.²⁸⁷ In reality, the population decline of the natives had begun with the arrival of the Welser, as they were enslaved, killed or fled inland. Bartolomé de las Casas' estimation that the German governors enslaved one-million and killed four

²⁷⁸ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, p. 200

²⁷⁹ Bandelier, *The Gilded Man*, p. 16

²⁸⁰ J.M. Henao & G. Arrubla, *History of Colombia*, trans. J.F. Rippy (New York, 1969) p. 31

²⁸¹ Lacas, 'Sixteenth-Century German Colonizing Venture in Venezuela', p. 277

²⁸² 'Licencia a los Welser para importar los 800 esclavos en toda América' [22/6/1534] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, pp. 158-9

²⁸³ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, pp. 555-6

²⁸⁴ Simmer, *Gold und Sklaven*, pp. 488-91

²⁸⁵ Friede, *Los Welser en la Conquista de Venezuela*, p. 555

²⁸⁶ 'Respuesta a tres cartas de los oficiales de Venezuela' [3/11/1536] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, pp. 43-4

²⁸⁷ 'Que el obispo Rodrigo de Bastidas informe sobre el numero de los indios caquetios y los ponga en libertad' in *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9

to five-million natives may be a ridiculous over-exaggeration; yet they undoubtedly helped deplete their numbers.²⁸⁸ Additionally, the failure of the Welser governors to implement the effective *encomienda* system, that served the Spanish so well, created further problems. It led to reprimands from royal authorities, who were ostensibly concerned for native welfare, as well as that of their impoverished countrymen.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, it created resentment from the colonists who were denied a means of both economic and social advancement, which might have helped alleviate their debt.²⁹⁰ It also enabled the natives to flee more easily, further depriving the province of potential labourers. Considering the Caquetio were a semi-sedentary group, which did not possess the well-established and complex administrative structures of the Aztec and Inca states, the Welser officials could not use existing indigenous labour systems as the Spaniards did in Mexico and Peru. Consequently, their ignorance of the *encomienda* system overlooked a European solution to co-opting native work groups. In an under-populated, poorly-provisioned province, which relied on native food production, this dearth of labour seriously jeopardised the sustainability of the colony and put more pressure on the *entradas*.

The treatment of the natives on the Welser expeditions was no better than in the main settlements. As slaving continued on the coast, periodic raids took place on the *entradas* in the hope of securing porters or potential commodities for their return to Coro. Von Hutten relates countless times of Hohermuth sending out lieutenants Martin, Velasco and Cardenas to capture Indians whilst on the mission, "all volatile and shared amongst the Christians".²⁹¹ This only led the native tribes to flee into the mountains of the Eastern Andes or the highlands of the south, which were harder to penetrate. Furthermore, Von Hutten explains how the natives "burned and devastated" their own food stores and maize fields before fleeing, to halt the march of the Europeans who they knew were reliant on them for nourishment.²⁹² When the Europeans did encounter native groups that were less than compliant, their response was typically a massacre, or the capture of the tribal chief for ransom. Neither Federmann nor Von Hutten saw a problem with this tactic. As noted above, Federmann shows no concern in his account for ambushing and killing "tribal people [who] eat

²⁸⁸ B. de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, trans. N. Griffin (Harmondsworth, 1992) pp. 97-101

²⁸⁹ 'Que el gobernador de Venezuela reparta los indios de la provincia' [11/12/1534] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 1, pp. 194-5

²⁹⁰ 'Que el doctor Navarro deshaga todo lo que haya dispuesto en Venezuela' [26/2/1538] in Moll & Otte (eds.), *Cedularios*, vol. 2, pp. 63-4

²⁹¹ "'Newe Zeytung'" in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 65. (Original: "alles flüchtig und friedbruchig, unter die Christen geteilt.")

²⁹² Ibid., p. 72

human flesh and massacre and slaughter their enemies”.²⁹³ Von Hutten, similarly, appeared to have no moral qualms about overrunning what he saw as “a bare, naked, bestial people”.²⁹⁴ The Welser leaders were men of their times, who viewed the American natives as an underclass or separate race.²⁹⁵ This had not prevented the Spanish in other colonies from using native alliances for their own benefit, as witnessed by the Aztec conquest, when the Spaniards joined forces with the Tlaxcalans. However, the indiscriminate nature of the Welser plundering allowed disparate tribes to unite against a common enemy they had previously never shared.²⁹⁶ The numerous native groups of the Venezuelan interior (See Table 5), with their own cultural idiosyncrasies and power alliances, appear to have been unacknowledged by the Welser explorers, who made no distinction between each tribe. This is partly understandable given the problem of communication between European

Governor	Native Group
Alfínger	Pacabueyes
	Bubures
	Onotos
	Buredes
	Coanaos
	Guiriguanas
	Aruacañas
	Zamiruas
	Pauxoto
	Haraacañas
	Thamara
	Zondagaus
	Zompachay
	Xiriguanas
	Paraguana
	Aruagas
Hohermuth	Pemenos
	Cuybas
	Cuyones
	Caquetio
	Mazopides
	Guaipies
	Chogues
Table 5: Natives Encountered by Alfínger and Hohermuth as Mentioned in Oviedo's <i>Historia</i> Source: F.G. Oviedo y Valdes, <i>Historia General y Natural de las Indias</i> (Volume 3) (Madrid, 1959)	

²⁹³ Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, p. 44. (Original: “Stämme essen Menschenfleisch und metzeln und schlachten ihre Feinde.”)

²⁹⁴ “‘Neue Zeytung’” in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 56. (Original: “ein bloß, nackend, bestialisch Volk.”)

²⁹⁵ P. Hess, ‘Marvellous Encounters: Albrecht Durer and early sixteenth century German perceptions of Aztec culture’ in M.R. Wade & G. Ehrstine, *Foreign Encounters: case studies in German literature before 1700* (Amsterdam; New York, 2005) p. 177

²⁹⁶ Steward & Faron, *Native Peoples of South America*, pp. 244-5

and native. Federmann had attempted to overcome this barrier by accruing an interpreter from each district he passed through, with a resulting language relay back to Spanish. However, “of every ten words I spoke, scarcely one would arrive exactly as I desired”, bemoaned the lieutenant-general.²⁹⁷

Language barriers made communicating with different tribes extremely difficult, particularly when their trust in the Europeans was low, therefore hindering exploration. The natives played on this by (falsely) informing the Europeans of where to go to obtain the riches they so obviously desired. As early as Alfinger’s devastations on the north coast, the natives had notified him of the great riches of the south, no doubt in an attempt to rid themselves of the abusive governor.²⁹⁸ These rumours persisted throughout the course of the Welser explorations, as the natives sought to lure the greedy invaders to their destruction at a false “El Dorado”. Von Hutten noted how a native tribe informed Hohermuth and his men of a land of gold and silver that came “from the other side of the mountain”, which proved impassable.²⁹⁹ Further on, another native chief pointed Hohermuth in the direction of a “rich province...20 or 30 days travel from here”,³⁰⁰ when it was likely he was simply guiding the Europeans to the district of the fierce Choque people, who forced them to retreat.³⁰¹ Whilst this setback did not end Welser hopes of discovering a rich territory of their own, it led to the failure of the Hohermuth expedition, and all the ramifications that brought, and encouraged Philipp von Hutten’s disastrous mission of 1541-6 to find the golden land, which he had read into the natives’ stories.³⁰²

The failure of the Welser to recognise tribal differences in culture and political allegiance, coupled with their incessant abuse of the natives both in the settlements and the interior, despite their overriding reliance on their assistance, ensured they could sustain neither an *entrada* nor, by extension, a colony.

The French made similar mistakes to the Welser colonists with regards to their native policy, which originated on Jacques Cartier’s first voyage in 1534, when he kidnapped Taïnoagny and Domagaya, sons of Stadaconan chief Donnacona, and took them back to France in the hope they

²⁹⁷ Federmann, *Indianische Historia*, p. 39. (Original: “so dass von zehn Wortern, die ihm befohlen waren, kaum eines zu unserem Guten geredet wurde. „)

²⁹⁸ R. Schuller, ‘The Date of Oviedo’s Map of the Maracaibo Region’, *Geographical Review*, Volume 3(4) (1917), pp. 297-9

²⁹⁹ “‘Newe Zeytung’” in P. Von Hutten, Schmitt & F.K. Von Hutten, *Das Gold der Neuen Welt*, p. 67

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 68

³⁰¹ Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser*, pp. 241-2

³⁰² Denzer, *Die Konquista der Augsburger Welser-Gesellschaft*, pp. 168-9

could be trained as interpreters.³⁰³ After some promising early signs of peaceful exchange, this was a grave insult to the native populace. Furthermore, before he left, Cartier ordered the erection of a stone cross inscribed with “LONG LIVE THE KING OF FRANCE”, which angered the natives who saw it as a territorial claim, despite Cartier’s declaration that it was a mere “guidepost”.³⁰⁴ These early actions established native mistrust towards the French and would hamper their future exploration and settlement attempts. As with other Europeans, such as Von Hutten and Federmann, Cartier had preconceived notions of the “wild and savage folk” he encountered, which led him to mistrust the St. Lawrence Iroquoians from the outset.³⁰⁵ On his second voyage, Domagaya and Taignoagny’s resentment at having been taken to France was evident, as they became “altogether changed in their attitude and goodwill”.³⁰⁶ As the two sons had been trained as interpreters for the French, they were in a position of power to negotiate between Cartier and their kin, and were also responsible for initiating the rumours of Saguenay.

The Saguenay myth would further alienate the French from the Iroquoians, as well as divert precious resources from the colony in 1541 and 1543. It is probable that Domagaya and Taignoagny concocted the story of a rich land to the west of Stadacona as a means of assuring their return to Canada on the second French voyage.³⁰⁷ What is surprising is that, like the Welser with the story of the “Meta” and “El Dorado”, the French accepted these rumours as fact, despite their normal mistrust of the natives. Cartier’s conviction that he knew the location of the “kingdom and province of the Saguenay” is astounding, given his lack of factual evidence.³⁰⁸ The people of Hochelaga embellished the story of riches by encouraging Cartier that a wealthy land was not much further west, in what again looks a typical ploy of the natives to rid themselves of European presence.³⁰⁹ Cartier’s own description of the Hochelaga region, “as fine a land and as level as ever one beheld”, confirms his excitement at the native fabrications and his belief that he was nearing his goal.³¹⁰

Such fanciful delusions only led Cartier and the French to ignore the practicalities of surviving in such a harsh climate as Canada, in which native support was essential. His trip to Hochelaga on his second voyage was in itself hugely damaging to French relations with the neighbouring Stadaconans. Acquiring European goods was of great prestige and practical use for the

³⁰³ R. Cook, ‘Donnacona Discovers Europe: Rereading Jacques Cartier’s *Voyages*’ in Cartier, Biggar & Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, p. xxxii

³⁰⁴ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s First Voyage, 1534’, pp. 26-27.

³⁰⁵ Cook, ‘Donnacona Discovers Europe’, p. xxi

³⁰⁶ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Second Voyage, 1535-6’, p. 52

³⁰⁷ Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage*, p. 166

³⁰⁸ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Second Voyage, 1535-6’, p. 65

³⁰⁹ Guitard, *Jacques Cartier in Canada*, p. 21

³¹⁰ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Second Voyage, 1535-6’, p. 74

natives of Canada, who had little early foreign contact, and the Stadaconans wanted to ensure they retained this privilege ahead of the Hochelagans.³¹¹ Considering that Stadacona was probably a vassal to Hochelaga, Donnacona's determination to maintain sole access to French trade is unsurprising, as it could have changed the political fortunes of his people.³¹² Cartier's ignorance of inter-native relations and breach of the upriver traffic trade privilege, driven by his lust for wealth, deprived the French of potentially invaluable allies for their future colonial settlement.³¹³ Having returned from Hochelaga, the French wasted their final chance to cement an alliance with the Stadaconans by refusing to help Donnacona defeat a potential usurper of his position, named Agona.³¹⁴ Cartier's misinterpretation or general lack of concern for native power structures along the St. Lawrence proved costly. His clear annoyance with Donnacona for not completely deferring to French demands led him to paranoid concerns that the Stadaconans would attack the French.³¹⁵ Donnacona's rivals accentuated these fears by informing the French of his habitual treachery, probably in an effort to improve their own standing with the Europeans.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, Cartier's actions on his second voyage alienated the vital Stadaconans, who were still supplying the French with food and cures for scurvy. Before his departure in May 1536, Cartier compounded matters by placing a more brazen territorial cross and issuing "orders for the seizure of Donnacona, Taignoagny, Dom Agaya, and two other headmen", no doubt in the hope that they would give more authority to the Saguenay story at the French court.³¹⁷ This antagonistic native policy ensured the survival of any future colony was in jeopardy before it started.

Donnacona's removal to France simply led to more thrilling tales at court of the Kingdom of Saguenay, which became ever more fanciful, yet appealing, to the French.³¹⁸ He spoke of "mines of gold and silver in great abundance", a plethora of exotic spices, and even "men who fly", which Francois readily believed.³¹⁹ However, by the time of the colonial expedition, Donnacona and the majority of the natives taken back to Europe had died, despite Cartier's promise that they would return.³²⁰ Although Donnacona's removal had enabled Agona to take charge of the Stadaconans, and he gave a great welcome to Cartier in 1541, the outward joy shown merely masked hostility and

³¹¹ B.G. Trigger, 'Trade and Tribal Warfare on the St. Lawrence in the Sixteenth Century', *Ethnohistory*, Volume 9(3) (1962), p. 243

³¹² Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, pp. 22-3

³¹³ Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, p. 78

³¹⁴ Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, p. 31

³¹⁵ Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-6', p. 81

³¹⁶ Cartier, 'Cartier's Second Voyage, 1535-6', p. 70

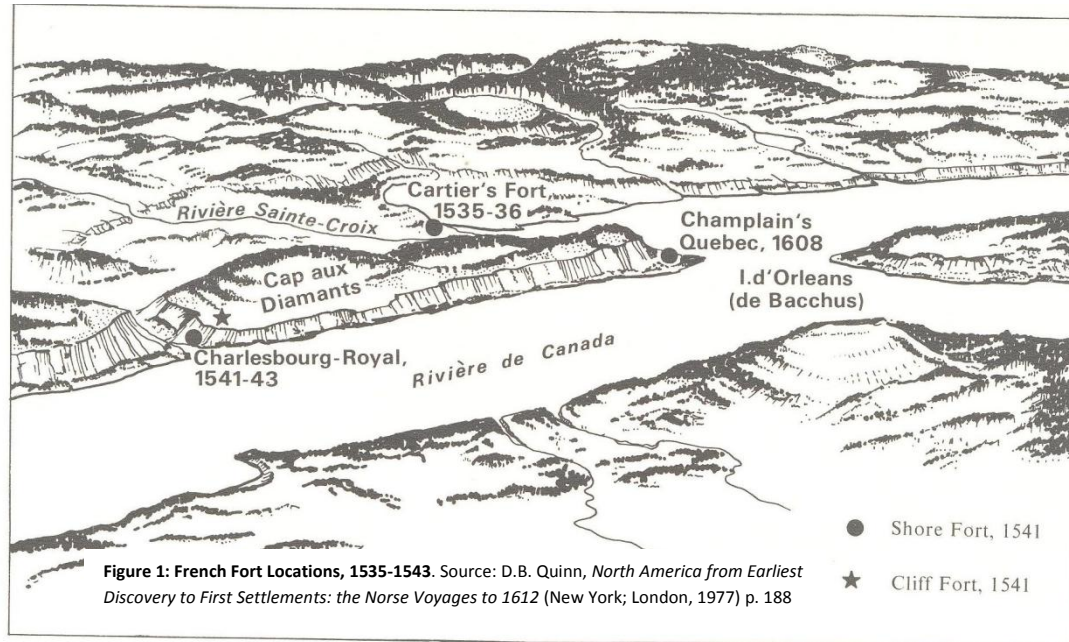
³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-4

³¹⁸ Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations*, pp. 22-3

³¹⁹ 'Letter from Lagarto to John the Third, King of Portugal', pp. 131-2

³²⁰ Boissonault, 'Jacques Cartier: his life and exploits', p. 32

disappointment.³²¹ The previous years of undermining and mistreating the natives had come back to haunt the French, and their defensive fort location, ten miles upriver from Stadacona, seems to suggest they realised this (See Figure 1).³²² On returning to Charlesbourg-Royal in 1541, having



failed to find Saguenay, the French found that the natives had stopped bringing them the food they so desperately required.³²³ Although the narrative of the colony breaks off at this point, subsequent reports from fishermen suggest the natives became even more hostile. Cartier related to Roberval how the natives “went about dayly to annoy him”, whilst Spanish sailors suggested that several French carpenters had been murdered and that “they killed more than thirty-five of Jacque’s men”.³²⁴ The native realisation that nothing good would come from Cartier and his countrymen is a likely explanation for these supposed attacks, which the weakened French would have found difficult to withstand.

Although the account of the Roberval mission suggests some trade continued between the French and natives, it is unlikely the latter gave as much support as they had first done with Cartier.³²⁵ Furthermore, whilst the accounts imply that the French did not physically abuse the Iroquoian natives, as the Welser had the inhabitants of Venezuela, we cannot be sure. Andrea Frisch has shown how the early accounts of the French in the New World were in the form of “official

³²¹ Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France*, p. 43

³²² Fiset & Sampson, ‘Charlesbourg-Royal and France-Roy’, pp. 60-1

³²³ Cartier, ‘Cartier’s Third Voyage, 1541’, p. 105

³²⁴ ‘Examination of Newfoundland Sailors Regarding Cartier’, pp. 163-66

³²⁵ ‘Roberval’s Voyage’, p. 110

reports... more in common with a legal document than with a work of historiography".³²⁶

Consequently, both Cartier and the Roberval account may have omitted certain details they would not have wanted Francois to see, such as the abuse of the native populace. Certainly, the viewpoint of Roberval as an "inflexible and autocratic man"³²⁷ is commensurate with his harsh discipline of his own men, whom he ruled with an iron fist.³²⁸ Such harshness may have been applied to the natives as well. Andre Thevet suggested in his *Singularitez* that some young soldiers under Roberval "dyd cut of bothe Armes and Legs of some of these poor people, bicause that they would proue whether their swords would cut well or no".³²⁹ Therefore, whilst not an obvious cause of alienation, physical harm must be considered concurrently with Cartier's earlier native policy. Furthermore, like the Welser, the French appeared to encounter severe communication problems that led to misinterpretation and disagreement, as well as failing to understand the ethnic and cultural differences of the tribes they met. Whilst not beyond doubt, it is likely that the Stadaconans and Hochelagans belonged to different ethnic groups, whose cultural differences may have been overlooked by the French, as the Welser had done in Venezuela, making it harder to maintain consistent relations with different tribes.³³⁰

The Welser and French colonies relied heavily on some native collaboration, yet their governors and colonists failed to appreciate their indebtedness to a "savage" race. This undermined the foundations of both colonies from the beginning as it tied in with false rumours of wealth, provisions and food resources that were so precious, and in the Welser case, relations with the Spanish. With a more flexible and better controlled native policy, both colonies would have stood a better chance of survival.

³²⁶ A. Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: witnessing and testimony in Early Modern France* (Chapel Hill, 2004) p. 16

³²⁷ Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage*, p. 171

³²⁸ 'Roberval's Voyage', p. 111

³²⁹ T. Hacket (ed.), *The new found vvorlde, or Antarctike wherin is contained wo[n]derful and strange things, as well of humaine creatures, as beastes, fishes, foules, and serpents, trées, plants, mines of golde and siluer: garnished with many learned authorities, traualled and written in the French tong, by that excellent learned man, master Andrevve Theuet. And now newly translated into Englishe, wherein is reformed the errors of the auncient cosmographers* (London, 1568) p. 128

³³⁰ There is continued debate over the ethnicity of the natives encountered by Cartier along the St. Lawrence. For an overview of the debate see: B.G. Trigger, 'Archaeological and Other Evidence: A Fresh Look at the "Laurentian Iroquois"', *American Antiquity*, Volume 33(4) (1968) pp. 429-40

Conclusion

By comparing two very different enterprises we can establish some of the key determinants for colonial failure in the New World. The French expedition to Canada was commissioned by the Crown and conducted for the nation, as France sought to counter the increasing power garnered by Spain from her New World territories. Meanwhile, the German-governed Welser colony was a multinational attempt to settle Venezuela, which tried to balance the commercial ambitions of the Augsburg merchants with the imperial desires of their patron, Charles V. Furthermore, the Welser colony lasted some fourteen times longer than its French counterpart. Despite such contrasting time-spans and compositions, the similarity in the causes for failure between the two is quite illuminating.

One of the most obvious factors underpinning the failure of both colonies was the lack of preparedness of the backers and settlers for creating a sustainable New World settlement. Neither colony possessed the necessary manpower or resources for a continued period to be able to create a stable base for colonisation. In the Welser case, this was largely due to the few ships sent by the Company from the Old World or Santo Domingo during the colony's existence. Furthermore, the appeal of Venezuela was in stark contrast to that of other New World territories, where Spanish rule and known riches were far more enticing than the German-governance and speculative exploration of the Welser colony. For the French, their lack of preparedness in large part stemmed from poor funding. Francois I's ruined treasury, recovering from years of intermittent warfare with the Habsburgs, was seemingly incapable of providing finance for the necessary provisions. As with Venezuela, Canada lacked the appeal necessary to uproot French citizens still unfamiliar with the New World, forcing the recruitment of unreliable convicts. It would take the religious wars and social strife of the second half of the century for the French population to consider emigration *en masse*, enabling more suitable colonial recruitment during Champlain's time.

With such an impoverished base for settlement, the leaders and settlers of both colonies attempted to find a quick economic solution to their problem through exploration. Whatever their patrons' original motives may have been, the Welser and French emigrants were similarly driven by false geographical belief, which encouraged them to advance despite no obvious evidence of what they sought. The Welser credit system meant the colonists were indebted from the outset, forcing them into questionable *entradas* in search of the mythical "South Sea", the riches of the "Meta", and, most infamously, "El Dorado". With very little sound reasoning, the Welser governors all conducted lengthy, and ultimately futile, discovery missions throughout Venezuela and its neighbouring provinces. They yielded very little reward, therefore failing to alleviate the burden of

the settlers of Coro and Maracaibo, whilst diverting precious resources and manpower away from these colonial centres, which remained mere mud villages. Whilst the French explorations were not comparable to those of the Welser, Cartier was also responsible for siphoning provisions and men from his fortification at Charlesbourg-Royale, within weeks of arrival in 1541. Continuing his long-held ambition of finding a western route to Asia, Cartier neglected the development of his new colony, which already lay on weak foundations. His returns were as poor as those of the Welser, and Roberval's exploration attempt two years later surrendered little more. Such pursuits suggest that the Welser and French colonists were more interested in gaining easy access to sources of wealth, with a mindset geared towards exploration, rather than the colonial pursuits necessary to create a long-term New World settlement.

It is significant that an exploratory desire is particularly evident in the leaders of both colonies. The Welser governors, as well as Cartier and Roberval, were given strong mandates for rule, since Germany and France were without established administrative and judicial bodies in the New World. Therefore, their willingness to fulfil the aims of the desperate colonists by searching for riches, as opposed to ordering sustainable development, helped shape the outcomes of the colonies. They constantly diverted men and resources away from their settlements whilst their lengthy absences (particularly in the Welser case) deprived their colonies of appointed leadership, creating power vacuums that bred discontent and factionalism. Even individual attitudes towards the natives were crucial, and the leaders set the standards for the treatment of their hosts, causing themselves further problems in the process.

Indeed, the encouragement to pursue legendary wealth was strengthened by the stories of the native populations of Venezuela and the St. Lawrence, who sought to move the European invaders away from their lands and societies. With such an unstable food base, and lack of knowledge of how to survive in their respective territories, the Welser and French were immediately reliant on native aid. As well as providing food and labour, they were invaluable as guides, interpreters and, on the Welser *entradas*, as porters. Despite such an obvious reliance on the natives, acknowledged by the few first-hand accounts of the enterprises, the Welser and French alienated and abused their indigenous hosts beyond the point of compliance. The Welser approach was far more brutal than the French, typified by the plunder, enslavement and murder wrought by Ambrose Alfinger on the north coast during the first few years of the colony. Such mistreatment of a previously friendly population ensured the Welser lost their only effective labour force, as well as creating countless problems for their discovery missions, on which the economic future of the colony relied. Whilst it appears that the French did not inflict the same barbarous abuse on the

natives as the Welser colonists, they still undermined relations with the St. Lawrence Iroquoians from first contact. Failing to understand the complexities of inter-native relations, Cartier ignored the wishes of the Stadaconans, who were invaluable to French survival at Cap-Rouge. Furthermore, his snatching of Donnacona and other prominent members of their society created a degree of mistrust that eventually turned to hostility. With the French reliant on a return trip to the Old World for re-supply of European goods, an alliance with the natives would have made sense. However, as was the case throughout the New World, the French and Welser colonists refused to operate on equal terms with what they deemed “savages”, and their failure to exploit them in the systematic fashion the Spaniards did deprived their under-manned colonies of assistance.

The neglect of their colony, brought about by continuous exploration and the lack of a stable population, saw the Welser authorities challenged by the Spanish officials of Santo Domingo and Madrid, who after 1534 took an increasingly interventionist role in Venezuela. Their concern for the economic viability of the colony, as well as the well-being of the Spanish colonists, understandably led them to interfere in affairs that the Welser were theoretically responsible for. Whilst this gradually led to the decline of the Welser colony, aided by the murder of Philipp von Hutten at the hands of Carvajal, the Spanish cannot be blamed for taking control of a province the Welser governors administered inefficiently. Without the patronage of Charles V, Venezuela might have been removed from Welser control a long time before 1556. The French, meanwhile, were not subjected to over-lordship by the Spaniards, who were their natural enemies during the period. Nevertheless, the Spanish concern regarding French intrusion into what they saw as their jurisdiction placed doubt on the colony from the outset. Furthermore, the Italian Wars in Europe had a direct impact on the Canadian colony, as the outbreak of conflict in 1542 effectively ended any hope of re-supplying the colony with men or provisions, with all attention diverted to the Habsburgs.

The two cases highlight three overriding causes that created colonial failure in the New World during the sixteenth century for a number of non-Spanish enterprises. Whilst the lust for riches would play a less decisive role in colonial failure after 1550 in comparison to religious conflict, which became more prevalent after the Council of Trent, the majority of the problems identified in this comparison proved undermining factors in other unsuccessful New World colonies. The Welser and French colonies both had the potential for success, had preparations been better and if the colonists were more willing to forgo a predominantly exploratory approach. However, their poor foresight and lack of adaptability ensured they could not overcome their initial problems and contributed to the downfall of their settlements. For the French in Canada, Samuel de Champlain and his successors would learn from the mistakes of Cartier and Roberval to create a thriving “New

France” in North America in the seventeenth century. As for the Welser, the Venezuela enterprise proved the difficulty of creating a profitable colony without royal backing. Indeed, the Company as a whole would be defunct within sixty years, suffering greatly from its Venezuelan losses. German involvement in the colonisation of the New World would be left to financiers and individual settlers, rather than active attempts at colonial governance.

Appendix 1 - Historical Background of Colonies

Political Background

Established in 1246, the Welser, of the free imperial city of Augsburg in Southern Germany, was a well-established trading company by the sixteenth century, with ventures ranging from involvement in the trade of luxuries from the Far East to domestic mining projects.¹ As such, they had accumulated a significant amount of capital wealth that enabled them to earn political patronage. The patronage they gained was the ultimate prize, that of Charles V, King of Spain from 1516 and Holy Roman Emperor from 1519. Indeed, Charles was reliant on the cash of merchants like the Welser in Germany and the Fornari in Italy to fund his campaign against Francois I for election to the Emperorship. Between them the Welser and Italian merchants raised 308, 333 florins, which ensured Charles was well-placed to buy the support of the various regional princes within the Holy Roman Empire.² This financial support allowed the Welser influence within Charles' court, particularly as the Emperor continued to rely on merchant finance to pay for the establishment of his colonial empire in the New World. The Welser family themselves turned their attention towards the New World in the 1520s, realising the commercial opportunities that participation there could provide.³ They established an office in Hispaniola in 1526 for their trading agents, at the same time that they were negotiating rights from Charles V to "explore and exploit" the territory of Venezuela.⁴ Without the political influence they had garnered with Charles through their financial support, the Welser would never have been able to involve themselves in the exploitation of the New World, and they would come to rely on this political patronage throughout their governorship in Venezuela. A further benefit of founding a colony within overall Spanish jurisdiction was that the Welser could exploit the already well-established administrative structure the Iberians had enforced to ensure cohesion between the New World and the Old. The Royal *Audiencia* (Royal Court) of Santo Domingo, established in 1511, held judicial and bureaucratic control over Charles' American territories, reporting to the Council of the Indies in Madrid (the ultimate authority) about any problems

¹ C.R. Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World: renaissance encounters with the strange and marvelous* (Charlottesville, 2008) pp. 95, 111

² The Welser and Italian merchants raised 308, 333 florins between them. M. North, 'The great German banking houses and international merchants, sixteenth to nineteenth century' in A. Teichova et al. (eds.), *Banking, Trade and Industry: Europe, America and Asia from the thirteenth to the twentieth century* (Cambridge, 1997) p. 36

³ G. Moron, *A History of Venezuela* (London, 1964) p.36

⁴ H. Waszkis, *Mining in the Americas: Stories and History* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 56

occurring in individual colonies. This allowed the Council to authorise solutions to various administrative problems in the New World, which theoretically benefited the colony in question.⁵

The political background of the French colony in Canada is similar to that of the Welser in that Charles V is again a central element. French King Francois I had been at war with Charles intermittently since the beginning of his reign in 1515, continuing the Italian Wars initiated by Charles VIII in 1494.⁶ These successions of conflicts were typically followed by uneasy truces, ensuring Francois' mind (not to mention his purse) was occupied by little else during much of his reign and therefore providing few decent opportunities for colonial expeditions. When Jacques Cartier returned from his second voyage to Canada in 1536, Francois and Charles were at war again⁷, preventing any immediate colonisation attempt, with resources and attention diverted. The conflict ended with the Treaty of Nice in 1538, but on the understanding that Francois would refrain from any more activity in the New World, which Charles perceived as his own.⁸ Indeed, this question of jurisdiction over the New World was an ongoing obstacle for French attempts at colonisation, as Charles V and the Spanish continually invoked the *Inter Cetera* papal bull of 1493 and Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 as proof that France had no right to settle there.⁹ The French colonisation attempt in Canada cannot be viewed without recourse to the political situation in Europe at the time, with Francois' fierce rivalry with Charles casting a shadow over all aspects of French foreign policy.

Economic Background

The economic background is very much interlinked with the political, particularly in the case of the Welser. It was their financial prowess and trading contacts that had enabled them to accrue the cash surplus, which ultimately bought political influence from Charles V. In theory, their economic strength would allow them to develop the colony in Venezuela along the lines wished for by themselves and their imperial overlords. However, it must be remembered that the Welser were primarily merchants driven by quick profit, not patrons of exploration like Francois or Charles.

⁵ J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven; London, 2006) pp. 123-7. Elliott gives a detailed overview of the Spanish administrative structure in the New World in his book.

⁶ R.J. Knecht, *Francis I* (Cambridge, 1982) p.33

⁷ D. Potter, *Renaissance France at War: armies, culture and society, c.1480-1560* (Woodbridge, 2008) pp. 9-10.

⁸ M. Bideaux, *Jacques Cartier/Relations; édition critique par Michel Bideaux* (Montreal, 1986) p.25

⁹ The Bull issued by Pope Alexander VI, and confirmed by the Spanish-Portuguese Treaty a year later, gave the Iberian powers Papal authority to divide the lands of the New World between them along a meridian 370 degrees west of the Cape Verde Islands. It was left to interpretation whether this divide included only known lands or any territory, as yet undiscovered, that may fall within this sphere. For description and analysis of the Bull, see: L.C. Green & O.P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations and the New World* (Edmonton, 1989) pp. 4-7

Consequently, any money they invested they expected immediate returns on and the Venezuelan colony was no different. Resources for the colony were credited to the settlers themselves, who therefore became immediately indebted to the Welser governorship.¹⁰ This created urgency for the colony to make profit and helps explain many of the settlers' actions, as well as their attitude towards the Welser, which posed problems for the enterprise. Whilst the Welser Company had the means to fund a serious colonisation attempt through traditional sources, as well as their newly established agencies in Seville and Santo Domingo, their strict economic policy ensured the Venezuela settlement would not have the provisions that were perhaps expected.

The French, on the other hand, struggled to finance the expedition to Canada despite Francois I's patronage. The Italian Wars had taken a heavy toll on the royal budget by the 1530s, with the employment of expensive mercenaries taking military salaries well above a manageable level.¹¹ Meanwhile, domestic merchants and bankers were suffering at the hands of their Spanish, German and Italian rivals who had already begun to profit from the New World gold and silver exports flooding into Seville.¹² As a result, there was little chance of domestic investment for speculative colonial expeditions and the wealthy Italian bankers of Lyons had no interest in bankrolling an almost penniless French state.¹³ Nevertheless, the reports of wealth brought back by Cartier from his previous voyages to Canada, furnished by the elaborate stories of the rich Kingdom of Saguenay provided by captured native chief Donnacona, encouraged Francois to back the colonial project with what he could.¹⁴ The potential to cut his trade deficit with, and reliance on, Muslim middle-men from the East, as well as possibly acquiring the gold necessary to destroy Charles V's ambitions in Italy once and for all, were too much of a prize for Francois to pass up.¹⁵ He may still even have harboured hopes of Cartier discovering a western route to Asia through Canada, despite his lack of success in this goal so far, as well as the failure of Giovanni Verrazano, who Francois had sent in 1524.¹⁶ Significantly, the precarious political and economic situation of Francois and the

¹⁰ K. Haebler, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter* (Leipzig, 1903) p.164

¹¹ J. Garrison, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483-1598: Renaissance, Reformation and Rebellion* (Basingstoke, 1995) p.156

¹² E. Vilches, *New World Gold: cultural anxiety and monetary disorder in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago; London, 2010) p.38; 203

¹³ F.J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1995) pp. 167-9

¹⁴ S.E. Morison, *The European Discovery of America: the Northern voyages A.D. 500-1600* (New York, 1971) p.431

¹⁵ The taking of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans cut off the traditional trade routes between Europe and the Far East. "As the Turks advanced into the Levant, Turkish custom duties had made the Arab trade more costly". A. Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians: historiography and the uses of Jacques Cartier* (Vancouver, 2010) p. 11

¹⁶ F.J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 1995) p.278

French crown in 1540 meant that, like the Welser colony in Venezuela, quick success was required, and this sense of urgency may indeed have proved fatal to French colonial ambitions in Canada.

Appendix 2 - Biographies

Welser Colony

Juan de Ampies: the founder of the settlement of Coro in 1527, Juan de Ampies had been sent to Venezuela by the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo to halt the illicit slave-raiding taking place on the coast. He established positive relations with the local Caquetio Cacique, Manaure, which ensured the Welser were welcomed by the natives on their arrival.

Rodrigo de Bastidas: The son of the conquistador of the same name, Rodrigo de Bastidas was appointed the first Bishop of Coro in the early 1530s. He would later become Interim Governor of the Welser colony on three occasions. In 1534 he took charge of the province whilst the Welser sought a replacement for Ambrose Alfinger. In 1538 he was sent back to Venezuela because of concerns over the well-being of Governor Hohermuth, who had been in the interior for three years. Finally, in 1540 he became temporary governor a final time because of Hohermuth's death. He played an important transitional role between Welser governorships and was a key source of information on Venezuela for the Spanish royal authorities.

Juan de Carvajal (d. 1547): A rogue Spanish soldier, Juan de Carvajal had spent time in Venezuela before he was sent as a representative of Licenciate Frias to begin *residencia* proceedings in the province in 1545. Carvajal responded by abusing his power. He acted like a de facto governor in the absence of Philipp von Hutten, moving the population of the province away from Coro to the interior, where he founded the settlement of Tocuyo in 1546. In an attempt to remain in power, Carvajal had Von Hutten and his deputy murdered and continued with his illegitimate command. However, a year later, Carvajal was found guilty of the murders by Licenciate Tolosa and was executed.

Ambrose Alfinger (ca. 1500-1533): Sometimes referred to as Dalfinger by the Spanish chroniclers, Ambrose Alfinger was the first governor of the Welser colony in Venezuela from 1529 until his death in 1533. Born near Ulm, Alfinger worked as a factor for the Welser Company in Spain until his Venezuelan appointment. During his governorship, Alfinger led two *entradas* into the interior of the province. The first, between 1529 and 1530, led to the foundation of the town of Maracaibo. His second mission began in late 1531 and resulted in his death in the Chinacota Mountains in 1533. His

governorship was characterised by the plunder of neighbouring native settlements, without attaining any meaningful wealth. His brutal treatment of the natives earned him the epithet of “the cruel of the cruels” in Spanish colonial history.

Heinrich Ehinger & Hieronymus Sailer: two factors of the Welser Company in Seville, Ehinger and Sailer signed the original capitulation for Venezuela granted by Charles V in 1528 on the Welser’s behalf. During Ambrose Alfinger’s absence on his first *entrada*, Ehinger and Sailer attempted to send the former’s brother, Georg, to take over the governorship of the province. This led to conflict with the Welser Company, who had appointed Alfinger, and the transference of the capitulation into their hands.

Nikolaus Federmann (ca. 1506-1542): Like Ambrose Alfinger, Nikolaus Federmann had worked for the Welser Company in Europe before heading to Venezuela in 1530. Appointed Deputy Governor to Alfinger, Federmann conducted his own *entrada* between 1530 and 1531, which failed to prove the existence of a “South Sea” or provide substantial booty. Sent back to Europe by Alfinger for carrying out this unauthorised mission, Federmann was initially appointed as the former’s replacement as governor in 1534. However, this appointment was quickly revoked because of concerns amongst the Spanish settlers that Federmann would continue Alfinger’s brutal regime. He returned to the province as Lieutenant-General and carried out his second *entrada* from 1536 until his arrival in Cundinamarca at the end of 1538. Federmann disputed the territorial jurisdiction of the rich province with Gonzalo Jimenez de Quesada and Sebastian de Benalcazar, returning to Spain in 1539 to press his claims before the Council of the Indies. However, he was arrested in Flanders in 1540 on the orders of the Welser Company for dereliction of duty and embezzlement of funds. Legal proceedings would continue against Federmann until his death in Madrid in 1542.

Georg Hohermuth von Speyer (ca. 1500-1540): Born in Speyer in the Rhineland, Georg Hohermuth was initially to be sent to Venezuela in 1534 as a Welser factor in Coro. However, after the revocation of Nickolaus Federmann’s nomination for the governorship of the province, Hohermuth was named Alfinger’s successor. Soon after his arrival in the Welser colony, Hohermuth led 490 men on an exploration mission in May 1535, seeking the riches of the famed “Meta”. The *entrada* was long, depleting and fruitless, and Hohermuth only returned to Coro in May 1538, exhausted after three years in the interior. Nevertheless, the governor soon travelled to Santo Domingo to try and acquire supplies and recruits for a new *entrada*. Despite his endeavours, Hohermuth would never lead another mission, as he died in 1540 after a short illness.

Philipp von Hutten (1505-1546): Philipp von Hutten came from a prominent merchant family and worked in the employ of the Welser from a young age. He spent time at Charles V's court, possibly as a Welser factor, and joined Hohermuth on his crossing to the New World in 1534. He accompanied the Hohermuth mission, providing a detailed account of the hardships suffered by the Europeans and their relations with the native populations. After Hohermuth's death in 1540, Von Hutten was appointed Captain-General of the province by Bishop Bastidas. It is probable that Von Hutten was to become the next Welser governor after returning from his search for "El Dorado", which commenced in 1541. His *entrada* was as unsuccessful as all the previous ones conducted by the Welser governors. After nearly five years in the interior, Von Hutten and his men returned to Tocuyo, where they had been informed Juan de Carvajal was present. After refusing to abdicate power in favour of Carvajal, Von Hutten and his deputy, Bartholomaeus Welser VI, were murdered. He was the last high-ranking German official in the Welser colony.

Esteban Martin (d. 1537): The most effective explorer in the Welser colony, Esteban Martin was crucial to the survival of the Welser *entradas* of Alfinger and Hohermuth. His aptitude for understanding the natives, excellent guiding of the expeditions, and fearsome combat ability made him indispensable in the search for riches. However, he died in 1537 during an attack by the Chogue nation.

Bartolome de Santillana (d. 1534): appointed Deputy in Coro for Governor Alfinger during the latter's second *entrada*, Bartolome de Santillana ruled in a dictatorial manner which brought civil strife to the colony. His brutal regime and staunch support of Governor Alfinger over the majority of the settlers alienated many Spaniards from Welser rule and led to Santillana's own arrest in 1534. He supposedly died during the journey to Santo Domingo, where he was to face trial for a long list of crimes.

Hans Seissenhofer (d. 1532): known as Juan de Aleman by the Spanish chroniclers, Hans Seissenhofer arrived in Coro in 1530 with the intention of assuming the governorship from the absent Ambrose Alfinger. Alfinger's return foiled Seissenhofer's plan and he remained in the province as a deputy until his death in 1532.

Licenciate Juan Perez de Tolosa (d. 1549): Sent to conduct a *residencia* of the province in 1546, Licenciate Tolosa ordered the trial and execution of Juan de Carvajal in 1547 for the murder of Philipp von Hutten. As the Welser failed to provide a new governor for the province, Tolosa effectively took this role. He oversaw the return of the capital to Coro, the construction of new coastal settlements and trade routes with the neighbouring Spanish provinces. He died in 1549 and

was succeeded by a series of temporary governors until the province was removed from Welser control in 1556.

Bartholomew (V) (1484-1561) and Anton Welser (1486-1557): the heads of the Welser Company throughout the lifespan of the Venezuela colony, Bartholomew and Anton Welser never travelled to the New World. They originally permitted Heinrich Ehinger and Hieronymus Sailer, two of their factors, to sign the Venezuela contract in their name. However, after Georg Ehinger (Heinrich's brother) attempted to usurp power from Ambrose Alfinger in 1530, the contract was renegotiated in the Welser name. During this period in Europe, Bartholomew and Anton Welser were two of the most successful merchants and had stakes in numerous ventures, allowing them to finance Charles V's treasury.

Bartholomew (VI) Welser: the son of Bartholomew V, Bartholomew (VI) Welser was sent to Venezuela in 1540 seemingly to impose some order on the colony and relate back to his father. However, he ultimately took part in the failed Von Hutten venture, which ended in his own murder at the hands of Carvajal in 1546 at Tocuyo.

French Colony

Paul d'Ausillon de Sauveterre: a French nobleman who accompanied the Cartier expedition in 1541, Paul d'Ausillon returned to France soon after his arrival in Canada, taking with him the "gold" and "diamonds" the French thought they had found. It is possible he was sent to relieve the Roberval colony in 1543 with fresh supplies and recruits. However, there is no evidence he ever arrived at his destination.

Jacques Cartier (1491-1557): was an experienced navigator from the fishing town of St. Malo. Although little is known definitively of his life before 1534 it is likely he had experience sailing the waters off Newfoundland, as many French fishermen of his time did. Furthermore, the references he makes to Brazil in the narratives of his voyages suggest he may have been involved in the merchant trade there. He was certainly skilled enough to win the support of Grand Admiral Phillipe Chabot, who chose Cartier for the first Canadian voyage in 1534. He conducted a second voyage in 1535, wintering near the native settlement of Stadacona before returning to France in 1536. After being given a commission for a third Canadian venture in 1540, Cartier was subsequently replaced as commander by the Sieur de Roberval, who was to lead a colonising mission. Retained as Master-

Pilot, Cartier led the first half of the colonists in 1541, returning the following year before Roberval's arrival. Little is known about Cartier after this point, except that he died at St. Malo in 1557.

Donnacona: the Lord of Stadacona, the place of French settlement in Canada, Donnacona was the chief of the Iroquoians inhabiting the region until he was captured by Cartier in 1536. He played an important role at the French court, convincing Francois I of the existence of the Kingdom of Saguenay. He died before he could return to his native land.

Domagaya and Taignoagny: sons of Donnacona, Lord of Stadacona, Domagaya and Taignoagny were seized on Jacques Cartier's orders during his first voyage in 1534. They were initially responsible for informing Cartier of the mythical land of Saguenay, which ensured their return to their homeland in 1535. Domagaya also provided the cure for the scurvy that broke out amongst the French in 1536. They were captured for a second time at the end of Cartier's second voyage, ultimately dying in France along with their father.

Jean-Francois de la Rocque de Roberval (c. 1500-1560): The Sieur de Roberval was a Protestant nobleman in the Catholic court of Francois I. He was purportedly a childhood friend of Francois, which negated the problems caused by his religious differences. He took part in the Italian Wars and conducted privateering ventures against Spanish fleets. He was renowned at court for his flamboyant and expensive lifestyle, which had led him towards bankruptcy by the time he received the commission to lead a colonial mission to Canada in 1541. Because he could not acquire the provisions he needed in time, Roberval sent Jacques Cartier to establish a settlement along the St. Lawrence and wait for his arrival. Roberval finally left La Rochelle in 1542, meeting the returning Cartier on the way. Despite failing to convince Cartier to return to Canada with him, Roberval continued with his men. He returned to France in 1543, where he began a career of piracy to negate his financial troubles. He was killed by a Catholic mob in 1560.

Appendix 3 – Colony Timelines

Welser Colony	Year	French Colony
March - Charles V awards administration of Venezuela to Welser Company	1528	
February - Governor Ambrose Alfinger and 300 colonists arrive in Coro	1529	
September - Foundation of Maracaibo		
January - Georg Ehinger attempts to take control of province in absence of Ambrose	1530	
April - Hans Seissenhofer also fails to take control as Ambrose returns from his 1 st <i>entrada</i>		
September - Nikolaus Federmann and 114 men head south on his first <i>entrada</i>		
March - Federmann returns to Coro	1531	
September - Ambrose Alfinger begins 2 nd <i>entrada</i>		
May - Governor Alfinger killed by natives at Chinacota	1533	
November - Remnants of Alfinger mission returns under Pedro de San Martin		
May - Rodrigo de Bastidas appointed Interim Governor by <i>Audiencia</i> of Santo Domingo	1534	April – Jacques Cartier embarks on his first voyage to Canada with 61 men
		September – Cartier’s first expedition returns to France
February - Georg Hohermuth von Speyer arrives as new Welser governor	1535	May – Cartier embarks on his second voyage with 110 men
May - Hohermuth leaves on <i>entrada</i> with 490 men		September – Stadacona reached for the first time
		October – Cartier reaches Hochelaga
Maracaibo settlement evacuated by Federmann	1536	May – Cartier captures Donnacona and departs Canada
March - Federmann commences his 2 nd <i>entrada</i> to the West of Coro		July – Cartier’s second expedition returns to France
Bishop Bastidas returns as Interim Governor in Hohermuth’s absence	1538	
May - Hohermuth returns to Coro with depleted forces		
July - The <i>Residencia</i> of Dr. Navarro commences		
November - Federmann reaches Cundinamarca and meets Quesada and Benalcazar		
July - Federmann and Quesada return to Spain to press claims for Cundinamarca	1539	
Federmann arrested on Welser orders for breach of contract and embezzlement	1540	October – Cartier commissioned for a third voyage
Cundinamarca is awarded to Quesada’s Santa Marta		
June - Governor Hohermuth dies		
November – Bishop Bastidas appointed Interim Governor a third time		
August - Governor-Elect Philipp von Hutten leaves Coro on <i>entrada</i>	1541	January – Cartier’s commission is revoked in favour of a colonisation mission under the Sieur de Roberval
		May – Cartier leaves France with 5 ships – Roberval remains
		August – French arrive near Stadacona and begin constructing the Charlesbourg-Royale settlement at Cap-Rouge
		September – Cartier heads towards Hochelaga in search of Saguenay
February - Federmann dies in Valladolid	1542	April – Roberval leaves La Rochelle with 3 ships
		June – At Newfoundland Roberval encounters the returning Cartier, who has abandoned Charlesbourg-Royale
		July – Roberval’s expedition commence the fortification of France-Roy settlement; also at Cap-Rouge
October - Licenciado Frias commissioned to conduct new <i>Residencia</i> of Welser Colony	1543	June – Roberval attempts to find passage to Saguenay and fails

		September – Roberval returns to France having abandoned settlement
January - Juan de Carvajal arrives in Venezuela as representative of Frias – he moves the capital inland to Tocuyo	1545	
May – Returning from their <i>entrada</i> , Philipp von Hutten and his Deputy, Bartholomaeus Welser, are executed by Carvajal	1546	
June – Licenciado Tolosa arrives in province and becomes de facto governor		
Welser face legal proceedings at Council of Indies in Madrid to determine fate of colony	1550s	
April - The Welser's Venezuelan contract is revoked	1556	

Appendix 4 - Glossary

Audiencia – Royal courts established throughout the Spanish Empire. The *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo, on the island of Hispaniola, was established in 1511 and remained the dominant New World court throughout the Welser period.

Cedula – royal decree

Council of the Indies – the highest administrative body relating to the Spanish New World, located in Madrid. It combined legislative, judicial and executive powers. *Cedulas* from the Council were final.

Ducats – second most valuable unit of common currency in Spain in the sixteenth century

Encomienda – “The privilege granted to a conquistador to collect tribute from the Indians who were entrusted to him, for his lifetime and that of his first heir; in exchange for this he promised under oath to be responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his *encomendados* and the defence of the district where they lived”.¹

Entrada – mission of exploration and conquest conducted by Conquistadores

Hispaniola – The island today made up of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Hispaniola was the first territory settled by the Spaniards in New World.

Livres – common currency of France up to 1795

Pesos – most valuable unit of common currency in Spain in the sixteenth century

Residencia – colonial assessments, carried out on the behest of the Council of the Indies in Madrid. They were often initiated in response to complaints by royal officials in particular colonies. An individual lawyer would be sent to conduct the *residencia* and report his findings back to Madrid.

Royal Fifth (Quinto Real) – A royal tax, usually applied to precious metals, but also to other commodities, whereby the Spanish Crown took 20% of all goods attained in their colonies.

Santo Domingo – The capital of Hispaniola and of the Spanish New World in general in the early period after discovery.

¹ Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico* (Volume 1) (New York, 1992) p. 353

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