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POWHATAN'S WORLD AND COLONIAL VIRGINIA

A Conflict of Cultures

Frederic W. Gleach

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✦ Introduction

There is an etiquette of respect and homage that, if followed, serves to unite and empower people. Such deference does not mean that one must forsake one's own cultural roots. We can all learn from each other. It is important that people be knowledgeable of their own tribal information, but they should be equally knowledgeable in the information of an adopted homebase. And they should respect their hosts—just as we all believe non-Indians should demonstrate respect of American Indians in general.

We don't want English, Germans or Italians to become Indians, and neither should Lakota become Mohegan. But, in Mohegan land, or Paugussett land, others should demonstrate respect. After all the years of destruction it is important now that surviving indigenous nations survive, and we all must assist each other.

—Karen Cooper, "When in Rome, or in the Woodlands"

THE SELF-CONSCIOUS STUDY of European perceptions and constructions of non-Europeans has been a dominant theme in anthropology in recent years (e.g., Said 1978; Bucher 1981; Todorov 1984; Clifford 1988; Hulme 1992). Perhaps partly in response to the implicit Eurocentrism of studies that define the non-European as *Other* (Gleach 1990b), there have also been occasional studies of Native American perceptions of Europeans and Euro-Americans (e.g., Brotherston 1979:28–60; Gleach 1990b; Kugel 1990, 1994; O'Mack 1990). The application of such studies to colonial Virginia is problematic; there has long been a feeling that relatively little could be known of the early Powhatans because of the paucity of early colonial records, particularly of any recording from Powhatan perspectives. In the past, models of Powhatan understandings have been based primarily on generalized psychological models that are ultimately rooted in western culture. I have developed here an approach to reconstructing aspects of a Powhatan world-view, based on Algonquian cultural patterns and on careful attention to details in the historical records,

with the goal a more objective treatment of these two sides of the history of early colonial Virginia.

Popular conceptions of Native Americans in the dominant American culture have ranged from "base savage" to "noble savage," with many of these still represented in commonly held stereotypes. All tend to ignore the native cultures as viable entities in their own right, however; they are Euro-American interpretations of distinctly different sets of cultural traditions that must be seen in their own terms for a proper understanding of their histories. Anglo-American policies of enmity and dominance have been so overwhelming that many people are not aware of the dynamic strength of native cultures, or of the ways in which Native Americans have come to be seen as subjugated. This is true not only within our popular culture, but also for many historians of early America, as recently described by Merrell (1989a). There have been anthropological and ethnohistorical studies of Indians and historical studies of the colonial efforts, but the interrelationships of the English colonists and the Indians have seldom been the focus of research, despite the acknowledgment over a decade ago of that particular gap (Tate 1979:30–32). This is nowhere more true than in the study of seventeenth-century Virginia (Merrell 1989a; Rutman 1987), where this interaction began, although Rountree's recent work (1990, 1993a) makes a great contribution in this area. The paucity of studies integrating both native and colonial perspectives, and the biases that have continued to haunt ethnohistorical studies of the Powhatans, especially the lack of studies based in a Powhatan world-view, have resulted, however, in continued misunderstanding of the history and misinterpretation of the events of colonial Virginia. *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia* intends to begin to change that.

The English who landed in Virginia in 1607, settling at Jamestown, were a small group of poorly supplied men dependent on the native population for their survival. The local natives, a confederation of Algonquian-speaking tribes known as the Powhatans and led by the paramount chief Powhatan, had prior experience with Europeans. In the 1560s one of their chiefs had been taken to Spain; he returned in 1570 as part of a Jesuit attempt to found a mission. That mission was destroyed by the Indians in 1571, and a Spanish military force returned in 1572 to avenge their deaths and rescue any survivors. The English likewise had prior experience with Algonquian Indians, through their attempted colony at Roanoke Island (the "Lost Colony"), and with other native peoples in prior colonial ventures, such as in Ireland (see Canny 1973). The colonial policies brought to

America were largely shaped by these experiences, and many of the colonists who came to Virginia had been in Ireland before. For both the Powhatans and the English, the other was understood through already extant cultural categories. The colonists' descriptions of the Indians and their culture — the only record from the time — were thus distorted into Europeanized caricatures from which the native culture in its own terms must be reconstructed.

During the early years of the colony the Powhatans and the English made mutual attempts to civilize each other. Through actions which were largely misunderstood by the other group, each group initially sought to demonstrate to the other its superiority in the relationship and to persuade the other to adopt "appropriate" ways of living. Each group also had certain material goods the other wanted, and the trade in these goods was a significant aspect of their relationship. The Powhatans sought luxury goods that might better be understood as objects of sacred power — particularly copper and glass beads, but also swords and guns — from the English, whereas the English primarily sought food from the Powhatans, particularly in the early years of their interactions. Both groups employed trade, negotiation, and military strength in the pursuit and demonstration of advantage, each group in its own terms. All can be seen as attempts to bring the other to civility, rewarding or punishing actions that were seen as good or bad.

English negotiations were conducted at the beginning by Captain John Smith, a widely traveled military leader who apparently gained a certain amount of respect from the Indians and a rapport with Powhatan himself. In the winter of 1607–8 he was a captive of the Powhatans, during which time a complex series of rituals was performed that brought the English colony into the Powhatan world. Smith departed in 1609, and, as the English began to expand into the heartland of Powhatan territory, violence between the two groups became more frequent. In 1614, relative peace between the two peoples was again obtained, through the marriage of Pocahontas (a daughter of Powhatan) and the colonist John Rolfe. The English saw this as a defeat of the Powhatans, although the resulting social relationships between the two groups were essentially those offered on several occasions by Powhatan as early as 1608. In 1617 Pocahontas died while visiting England, and Powhatan turned over leadership of the Indians to his brother Itoyatan[1] and his cousin Opechancanough.

By 1620–21 the English had expanded far into Powhatan territory, killing a number of Powhatans in the process of occupying essentially the entire

James River drainage in the coastal plain. They were also beginning to proselytize actively among the Indians. The Powhatans were willing to accept the English God into their pantheon, but few, if any, were willing to forsake their religion entirely. These twin assaults on the Powhatans were the primary causes of the Great Massacre of 1622, an attack that has long been seen as a turning point in English-Powhatan relations.

In early 1622, a powerful war-chief, Nemattanew, who the Powhatans considered invulnerable to bullets, was shot and killed by the English. Less than two weeks later, on 22 March 1622, the Indians throughout much of the Powhatan region collected whatever implements were convenient and killed the colonists in a perfectly coordinated attack. The settlements further inland, farthest dispersed into Powhatan territory, bore the brunt of the attack, whereas most of the more easterly settlements emerged unscathed. Of the English population, numbering 1,240, at least 320 were killed that single day. Scalping and other acts of humiliation were practiced on the corpses. This event was perceived by the English as an attempt to exterminate them, an interpretation that has held until very recently. Arguing from the perspective of native cultural institutions, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia* argues that extermination was not, in fact, the intention of this act.

I use the term *coup* for this attack, rather than *massacre*—the contemporary term—or *uprising*—as Fausz (1977) prefers. The word *massacre* has too many pejorative connotations and is not accurate: it properly refers to "unnecessary indiscriminate killing of human beings" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971, s.v. "massacre"), which these actions were only in the minds of the English colonists. The term *uprising* is equally problematic. As I show in this book, the Powhatans saw themselves not as inferiors, a requisite for an *uprising*, but rather as morally and politically superior to the English. The Powhatans applied the large-scale attack as a corrective measure to the unruly colonists. While intended to correct a Eurocentric view from which this could only be considered a *massacre*, with all the pejorative connotations, the use of the term *uprising* for this incident is itself an (unintended) case of Eurocentrism, with its implication that the Powhatans must have been, or at least must have perceived themselves as being, under the domination of the English colonists (Gleach 1990b). Finally, by *coup* I do not mean *coup d'etat*—a stroke of state policy—but simply a blow, a successful stroke; most closely, a *coup de main*, "[*lit.* stroke of hand] 'a sudden and vigorous attack' " (*OED* 1971, s.v. "coup de main").

Another term used recently in discussions of these events is *Anglo-*

Powhatan Wars (e.g., Rountree 1990, 1993b; Potter 1993), a phrase first used by Fausz (1977:267); there are supposed to be three wars, one in the early 1610s, and one each following the 1622 and 1644 attacks. Like *uprising*, this term valorizes the violence of these periods, in this case by according it the same status as European military campaigns. This terminology, however, assumes our traditional dichotomy of peace and war, where war is the marked state when one is not at peace. This dichotomy is nearly irrelevant in Native American cultures, where war and peace were often ongoing, simultaneous processes, engaged by different portions of the population; young males were expected to engage in warfare, whereas male elders and females generally did not, although there were certainly exceptions. The colony may have declared war on the Powhatans following the 1622 and 1644 coups, but, although acts of warfare in a general sense, the coups themselves and the violence of the 1610s were not of the sort generally connoted by the term *war*. There were cultural and political factors in these attacks (by both sides) that remove most of them from legally proscribed domains such as assault or murder, but they were not wars as the term is commonly used, much less named, capitalized, *Wars*. I examine the different constructions of the meanings of war and violence in chapters 1 and 2.

Following the 1622 coup the English pursued a war of retribution against the Indians. For several years proclamations and legal decisions reiterated that a state of "perpetual enmity" existed between the English and the Powhatans; at one point, a peace treaty was even annulled because of this enmity (Craven 1970:172–73). In this period, rather than earlier, the Indians must have begun to be aware of the differing constructions of the relationship between the two peoples, as the English reaction was not what the Powhatans' conception of war and dominance allowed them to expect.

This state of aggression on the part of the English was countered by the profits that were to be obtained by trade with the Indians, and for a time in the 1630s it seemed that an uneasy peace had been reached. This was shattered in 1644, however, when Opechancanough, then reckoned to be near one hundred years old, led a second attack against the English. This resulted in an even larger number of English casualties than the first, although it represented a smaller proportion of the colonial population at that time. Opechancanough was captured and ultimately murdered in jail; war was again pursued against the Indians; and the Powhatans' mobility and choice of places to settle were increasingly restricted by law and by the unceasing influx of English settlers.

In 1676 Nathaniel Bacon, a newly arrived settler, led a popular uprising

against the governor of Virginia known as Bacon's Rebellion. This began with a series of attacks against nearby Indian groups, culminating in Governor William Berkeley's flight to the Eastern Shore. Bacon was proclaimed governor. He died of dysentery, however, and the movement soon collapsed; Berkeley returned as governor. One result of Bacon's Rebellion, however, was the legal establishment of a number of reservations for the remnants of the Powhatan tribes, of which only two were to survive, those at Pamunkey and Mattaponi. These were the first reservations established in what was to become the United States. Today surviving Powhatans can be found on these reservations as well as in several nonreservation communities in Virginia and elsewhere.

These events of seventeenth-century Virginia established the pattern of Indian-white relations over the next three centuries. Each group sought to further its own aims. At times the behavior of each group fit the way it was perceived by the other; at other times there was a conflict between expected and perceived action. When this conflict became too great, and particularly when there was a perceived threat to the cultural order, the categories of meaning and understanding had to be redefined, and this violent rending of the cultural order was often accompanied by increased physical violence. These events mark changes in cultural perceptions and, thus, in forms of interaction.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In eastern North America, colonial history has been the subject of historians and historical archaeologists and has focused primarily on the English colonial population, although recent works have attempted to add the African slave populations to the understanding of colonial America (Deetz 1988; Ferguson 1992). The Indians of the region have been studied by ethnohistorians, anthropologists, and prehistorical archaeologists. The research of Thomas et al. (1978) treats both native and European colonial cultures but generally deals with them separately. Studies integrating both histories and focusing on the relationships between native and colonial groups have been rare (see Merrell 1989a) but include Kupperman's study (1980) of early colonial Virginia and New England, Dickason's monumental study (1992) of the "founding peoples" of Canada, and Merrell's own work (1989b) on the Catawba Nation and colonial South Carolina.

In a more general context, a rapprochement between history and anthropology has long been developing and takes a variety of forms (Cohn

1987a, 1987b; Carmack 1972; Krech 1991). The various elements introduced from the two disciplines can include an interest in chronology, in the playing out of events, in the Other, and in the relevant cultural understandings of events and structures. Examples of such work may be found labeled as historical anthropology, anthropological history, or ethnohistory. Historical anthropology involves much more than the written history of an Other, however; it involves "the delineation of cultures, the location of these in historical time through the study of events which affect and transform structures, and the explanation of the consequences of these transformations" (Cohn 1987b:73). No participant in a colonial situation can be given primacy over others as agents responsible for historical developments. The goal of historical anthropology is to understand the interactions of historical process and conscious action with the unconscious structures of culture.

Historical anthropology is only one of the many approaches that have been called *ethnohistory*; it is rooted in a widely held perception that "people without history" (Wolf 1982) is, itself, a mythic category. As Fogelson and others have noted, history, "a sense of the past," is found among all cultures, although the forms of those histories can take radically different forms from our own (Fogelson 1989:134). A proper understanding of other histories thus demands that we make "a determined effort to try to comprehend alien forms of historical consciousness and discourse" (Fogelson 1989:134) — just as the ideas of western history have been studied (e.g., Collingwood 1956; Furet 1984).

Sturtevant presented the possibility of defining ethnohistory as "the conceptions of the past shared by the bearers of a particular culture, rather than (the more usual sense) the history (in our terms) of 'ethnic groups' " (1964:100), a concept for which Hudson (1966) then suggested the term *folk history*. This is much more than just the "history of primitive or traditional cultures" or the "anthropology of past primitive or traditional cultures" (usages criticized by Dening [1991:356]), but many people used — and continue to use — the term in just such loose fashion (see Sturtevant 1966; Carmack 1972; Krech 1991). A decade later, Fogelson (1974:106) introduced the term *ethno-ethnohistory* to reemphasize the parallels to other ethnomethodologies, but it was seldom used; another decade later, T. S. Turner (1988) used the same term, placing it more explicitly in a theoretical framework of the relations of structure and events.

It is important to recognize, and remember, that taking native terms and concepts into account does not mean that the product of these efforts is a

"native" history. Nor should that necessarily be our goal. As DeMallie has observed,

> when we write academic historical narratives, we are not restricted to the particular cultural constraints of the actors, although they form one basis for interpretation. Our work is not usually focused on telling about the past exclusively in its own terms, but rather includes perspectives from the present as well, for just as we are outsiders to other cultures, we are also outsiders to the past. To restrict our narratives to the participants' points of view would be to negate the value of historical study as a moral enterprise, the purpose of which is to learn from the past and, in Ricouer's phrase, "to enlarge our sphere of communication" ([1981]:295). By the very act of composing a narrative, we necessarily impose cultural perspectives and make moral judgements. But to write a narrative about the past without attempting to understand historical cultures in their own terms would vitiate its significance as history. In short, understanding the past in its own terms is a necessary, but not sufficient condition of the writing of history. (1993:525)

The combination of analytical and narrative tools — essentially, using synchronic studies of the structures of culture to inform historical narratives that in turn involve those structures in diachronic processes and thus reveal still more of their nature — is the strength of this approach. Note, too, the significance accorded here to an "outside" position, the value of considering the perspectives of both "insiders" and "outsiders." Dening has also recently commented on this as both "the advantage and the frustration of historical anthropology," observing that "anthropology's vision is built not on the 'primitiveness' of the native but on the advantage of the dialectic between distance and familiarity" (1991:375). At a time when the politics of identity are producing scholarship and academic programs founded on the essentializing principle that one must "be one to study one," it is important to remember the positive effects that can result from an outsider's perspective. Going beyond DeMallie's observation, I would say that both understanding the past in its own terms and submitting that past to analysis and interpretation are necessary but not sufficient conditions for a historical anthropology.

Although the awkward term is only seldom used, the "ethno-ethnohistorical" approach has been employed in a number of significant works by scholars working in various parts of the world (e.g., Gewertz and Schief-

felin 1985; Hill 1988), of whom Sahlins is perhaps most notable. Explicitly grounding "histories" in the details of the cultural contexts in which they originate, these approaches jointly implicate structure and event in culturally specific dynamic historical processes.

Sahlins has developed a concept of historical events and cultural contexts in his studies of Fiji (1991) and the Hawaiian Islands (1981, 1985, 1995) in which people's actions are a product of their cultural understandings of the world around them and thus of the cultural systems within which they act. His Hawaiian research has been harshly criticized by Obeyesekere (1992), in a problematic but surprisingly well-received book; Sahlins has recently answered these criticisms (1995). Obeyesekere's chief criticisms are on questions of Western and non-Western modes of thought and expression, on one level, and on readings of documents and questions of voice, on another. Sahlins's case, based on specifics of the Hawaiian context, is much more persuasive, even if expressed through Western voices, than Obeyesekere's claim to an essentialized "native" understanding and invocation of what Sahlins refers to here as "bourgeois rationality" (1995:8–9) — not an *ad hominem* dismissal, but a construct he had developed in detail as "*la pensée bourgeoise*" (1976:166–204) — and at several points in this book my interpretations similarly rebut a kind of imputed universal economic rationality.

The crux of this theoretical framework concerns the relationships of structure and events and of cultural orders and individual actions. Structure and action (or events) have long been treated as opposing ideas — synchrony versus diachrony — partly due to Saussure's analytical need to separate *la langue* from *la parole* in linguistics, in order to isolate the process of signification (Sahlins 1981:3–8; cf. Lévi-Strauss 1963, Saussure 1966). In anthropology a parallel notion to that of linguistic signification developed in which culture is seen as a symbolic means of ordering and thus of interacting with the universe; the history of this concept — and its opposition to a notion of culture derived from function or behavior ("practical reason") — has been set out by Sahlins (1976), tracing its roots to Boas and drawing connections to Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss. The cultural structures emphasized here were generally divorced from historical processes, although history was still commonly seen as important (Lévi-Strauss 1963:23–24, Sahlins 1981:6). This "too simple dualism of 'event' and 'structure' " can be overcome, however, by defining their articulations (Sahlins 1991:44).

Sahlins has called this process the " 'structure of the conjuncture,' meaning the way cultural categories are actualized in a specific context through

the interested action of the historic agents and the pragmatics of their interaction" (1991:80–81; cf. 1981). In other words, the action of individuals may produce an instantiation of the cultural structure, a meaningful action, where meaning is derived from a particular cultural [-historical] structure; the individual action is taken to represent something larger. That unique action, in turn, may produce effects upon the cultural structure, through "the attribution of general meanings to particular incidents" (Sahlins 1991:82). Actions become eventful through these structural consequences, which may range from reproduction to transformation (see Cohn 1987a:46).[2]

Furthermore, these actions may be interpreted within a cultural system that is not necessarily the one in which they originated, and thence have effects, thus having the potential to change not only the cultural system in which they originated, but others that are implicated (Sahlins 1985:143–53, 1991:39–48). An action that is eventful in one context may not be so in another (see Fogelson 1989; Sahlins 1988), a condition particularly prevalent in colonial situations, where very different cultures are likely to interact. An understanding of each system of belief, of each world-view — colonial and native — is thus essential to interpret the actions arising from them.

The key to being able to conduct such a study is the availability of information in sufficient detail to reconstruct both the historical contexts and the cultural systems in action in the particular situation of interest. The historical record of the events of seventeenth-century Virginia is less completely detailed than that of the situations studied by Sahlins, but certain classes of available information permit such study. These can be augmented by the available knowledge from archaeological work in the area and from comparative ethnological and archaeological analyses of other Algonquian groups. Because each of these sources carries its own biases and represents a particular cultural construction of reality, none can be given primacy. They must be woven together and their similarities and differences compared, providing an improved understanding of the cultural systems from which they arise and thus of the history of interaction.

In traditional English terms, two types of interaction dominated the relationship between the English colonists and the Powhatans in the earlier seventeenth century: trade and warfare. The English colonization of the New World was a mercantile venture, with overtones of bringing Christianity and civilization to the natives. The Indians were also interested in trade, though their motives were to obtain objects of spiritual power (see Miller and Hamell 1986) and thus maintain and enhance their political and

personal positions. Warfare was a normal means of settling conflicts of interest and maintaining the status quo, although other means, such as holding a captive hostage, were also employed by both sides.

The meanings and forms of warfare, trade, and all other forms of action within the Powhatan culture must be reconstructed, for they were recorded only from the English perspective, for the most part by individuals with no interest in understanding them from the Powhatan perspective. Although the Indians accepted many English goods and ideas, they took them and made them their own rather than simply receiving them in the terms of the English (Miller and Hamell 1986). Everything that happened was interpreted within the cultural scheme — or, in the colonial situation, within two or more distinct cultural schemes — and gained significance in terms of its meanings within those cultural schemes.

A key example of the differences in meaning assigned to a particular event is the captivity of Captain John Smith in the winter of 1607–8, when the infamous rescue of Smith by Pocahontas took place. To Smith this was an unconnected series of events over about a month's time, including his capture (a military defeat), accusations of murder (adjudication), inclusion in rituals (to determine his reason for being there), rescue (which was inexplicable), and his return to Jamestown (victory — returning to his prior state of freedom). As I show in chapter 4, for the Powhatans these events were most likely part of a single protracted ritual, making a place for the English colony in the Powhatan world and recognizing Smith as one of the leaders of the colony. To complicate matters further, beginning in the nineteenth century a new meaning was given to the rescue event: it became a myth, a self-aggrandizing story invented by Smith. In recent decades a new layer of complexity has been added to this latter meaning: rather than simple self-aggrandizement, it became archetypical of a process of European invention of Others based on European conventions and traditions. The validity and biases of a text must always be considered, but my interests here lie in the events and their contemporary meanings and effects, not these latter-day interpretations. These events are crucial to understanding the early developing relationships between the Powhatans and the English.

The 1622 coup is another key event to understanding the relationships between the English and the Powhatans. This was an event motivated by the perception of the interactions within the Powhatan cultural system, with effects based on its interpretation within the English cultural system. In the most extensive study of this event to date, Fausz (1977) argued that it was caused by the murder of Nemattanew, that the Powhatans saw their

traditional culture as destroyed by 1617, and that Opechancanough was leading a revitalization movement with the goal of annihilating the English, with Nemattanew as his war leader. This reconstruction, however, is based only on English perceptions of the relationship between the two groups.

The 1622 coup became eventful through its effects, first among the English and then, upon English reprisal, among the Powhatans. It prompted both sides to begin to reassess their relationship. The terms of that relationship had developed in the preceding years, following the arrival of the English at Jamestown, and were in turn based on earlier interactions with the Spanish and others. They were to remain in flux to the middle of the century, at which time they began to be codified by the colonists in legislative acts, to which the Indians eventually acceded. The 1644 coup is to be seen as a later example of the contestation of the terms of the relationship between the two groups.

In order to understand these events, and thus the history of the interactions between the two groups, from the Powhatan perspective, one must reconstruct their systems of belief regarding relationships with non-Powhatan others. These involve trade and warfare, both of which are based on Powhatan institutions of authority and in turn on cosmology. These systems can be reconstructed from the records of the English through careful reading of the ethnographic accounts of the Powhatans, both seventeenth-century and later, supplemented by accounts of other related Algonquian groups. Miller and Hamell (1986) provide an example of the way in which this can be done, describing native perceptions of value as they can be reconstructed from the particulars of trade and from ethnographic knowledge of belief systems and color and material symbolism, in a study that is directly applicable to the Powhatan situation.

The type of reconstruction I have employed is an application of what Eggan (1975 [1954]) called "controlled comparison." The control here is based on long-recognized cultural similarities between Algonquian groups (Speck 1924, 1926:299–311; Flannery 1939), and on an assumption that the Powhatans would not have immediately suffered complete culture loss—that some traces of distinctly Powhatan culture could remain, perhaps even into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This latter assumption is supported by the ethnographic work of Speck (1925, 1928, n.d.), Rountree (1975, 1990), and passing mentions by Gatschet (n.d.), all of whom found some evidence of cultural continuity beyond the colonial period. As in all historical research, there is also an assumption that documentary sources reflect real phenomena, although they must be interpreted, taking into

account biases in observation and transmission. After these sources have been evaluated, the comparisons one makes are between the cultural phenomena represented by the original sources, not the individual sources themselves; "the type, not the single object" (Thompson 1970:359; cf. Collingwood 1956:275).

In cases where there is relatively little information, it may be possible to employ an extension of this process that I have referred to as "controlled speculation," borrowing a phrase from Mednick (Gleach 1996a). These are inherently subjective processes, like any interpretation — including traditional Western histories[3] (see Collingwood 1956:231–49, Furet 1984:17–19) — depending for their success on an ability to assemble sufficient supporting information. The assumptions on which controlled speculation proceeds are essentially those of controlled comparison: recognized cultural similarities. Although some might want to argue that certain things can never be known, or that more speculative reconstructions have no place in scholarly activities, I agree with Dening "that in academic history and anthropology it is better to do what can be done than to declare what cannot" (1991:376). Interpretations and supporting material simply need to be presented sufficiently clearly for the reader to properly evaluate the conclusions, as is true of all scholarship.

In working with comparative material, this information must be evaluated not only for its reliability — which also generally involves comparison with other sources — but also for its relevance to the context. This depends on a knowledge of the cultural meanings and relationships involved. One cannot assume, for instance, that a cultural institution documented in one society would be the same in a neighboring society, or in every society sharing the same language. There is often information to help determine the likelihood of such parallels or similarities, however, in the form of passing mentions and partial accounts. The historical record is replete with tantalizing passages that suggest the presence or form of various rituals, beliefs, institutions, or social structures. Partial descriptions from one group often seem to match more completely described cultural practices from related or neighboring groups, and similarities in other related phenomena may also be documented. In such situations, in the absence of any contradictory evidence, I believe that an assumption of similarity between the two cases is justified.

Because language is a cultural phenomenon that is highly codified and relatively easily analyzed and compared, it is one of the principal factors in comparing Native American groups. In many situations cultural similarities

exist despite linguistic differences, and cultural variability within a linguistic group is common; nevertheless, there are often relationships between the two. Care must always be used in arguing from one to the other, but it can judiciously be done.

North America is subdivided into a series of culture-areas, geographic divisions intended also to reflect cultural relationships, or at least similarities; the Powhatan Indians are typically classified in the northeast (Trigger 1978). This might seem unusual, since Virginia is a southern state, but the Powhatans were among the Algonquian-speaking nations, a diverse group occupying a range from North Carolina into northern Canada, and inland west of the Great Lakes (figure 1). Because the historical relationships within this large group are complex and are compounded by the movements of several groups at different times, subgroupings are commonly used, based on linguistic and cultural affinities. The principal division is between central and eastern Algonquians,[4] with all of the eastern Algonquian groups (from the Micmacs in Maine to the North Carolina Algonquians) fairly closely related (Goddard 1978a); they probably diverged from the other Algonquian groups about 3000 years ago, moving east and then spreading southwards (Goddard 1978b:586–87; Rhodes and Todd 1981:60–61). In contrast, central Algonquian languages (which include Shawnee, despite the early location of those people in the southeast) are all historically distinct independent developments of the ancestral "Proto-Algonquian" language (Rhodes and Todd 1981:52). Since they are linguistically distinct from the eastern group, Cree and Ojibwa are typically placed in the central group, although the distributions of those languages range from the Atlantic coast into Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Within these groupings, there are also marked cultural differences from north to south; some based on environment, others adaptations from various neighboring groups, others simply representing different trajectories of cultural change. For instance, the southern groups were more reliant on horticulture, although still employing fishing, hunting, and gathering; horticulture was not even possible for the most northerly Algonquians. In addition to the Algonquian groups there were others in this region, the best known of whom are probably the Iroquoian nations of the northeast, but there were smaller Iroquoian groups in southern Virginia, and the Cherokees of North Carolina; to the west of the Powhatans were less-well-known groups, probably Siouan-speakers. The Powhatans were among the southernmost groups classified in the northeastern culture-area, and as such they also exhibit cultural similarities to neighboring southeastern groups;

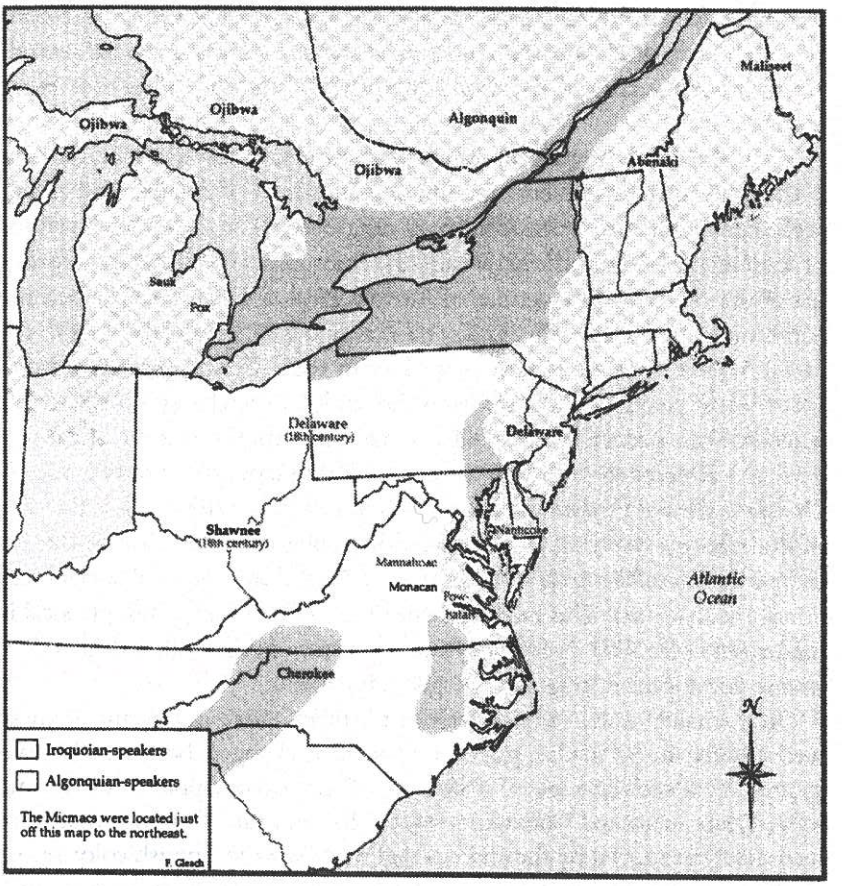

FIGURE 1. Selected Native Cultures of Eastern North America

they are sometimes considered southeastern themselves — which certainly makes sense in the political realities of the later colonial and postcolonial period, a realm dominated by the Euro-American culture. Because of the diversity within the region and between Algonquian groups, care must be exercised with comparisons of both sorts. Nonetheless, comparison is possible.

In addition to the written records, the events of seventeenth-century Virginia also left a physical record that can be read in much the same way that historical records must be read, bearing in mind the context within which the record was generated. The physical record forms, to some extent,

a complement to the historical record; the biases of the historical record are often race- or class-based (Indians, servants, and slaves tend to be relatively poorly represented), a bias the physical record suffers to a lesser extent.

On a large scale, one aspect of this physical record that is applicable here is the pattern of settlement: the physical locations of English and native settlements and their relationships to each other. The changing locations of settlements for both the native and the colonial populations were a product of the changing interactions of the two groups. It has recently become common in historical archaeology to examine the "landscape" of the colonial Middle Atlantic region (e.g., Upton 1988; Kelso 1989; Rubertone 1989). Most frequently this refers to the study of the changes made in the landscape of a particular site or of a developing urban area. One of the few works to attempt to deal with the cultural landscape as an entity is Isaac's *Transformation of Virginia 1740–1790* (1982). Central to this work is the idea of dramaturgy, referring to the reflection in actions — and thus in the socially constructed landscape (and other physical domains) — of social ideas (Isaac 1982:350–51). This embodiment of the conceptual in the physical is the process that allows going beyond the kinds of regional models of economic development long used by geographers.

On a smaller scale, certain classes of artifacts were important in these interactions: in particular, goods that were exchanged between the two groups. Two such groups of artifacts are Colono-ware pots (Noël Hume 1962; Deetz 1988) and Chesapeake pipes (Emerson 1988), goods that were most likely produced by the Indians and traded to the English colonists or to their servants (Gleach 1990a). The timing of their introductions and popularity, the contexts within which they are found, and the elements of their design all encode aspects of the producing and consuming populations and their relationships, which can be reconstructed through careful study (Deetz 1988; Emerson 1988; Gleach 1990a).

METHODOLOGY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The events on which I focus are the attempted foundation of the Spanish Jesuit mission in 1570, the captivity of Captain John Smith in 1607–8, the coup of 1622, and Opechancanough's second coup of 1644. Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 is also discussed briefly, since a result of this event was the formal establishment of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservations, defining in a single act of legislation the restrictions of free movement and

territories that had developed over a half-century from practice and a succession of legal rulings.

These events are documented with varying degrees of detail in the historical record—from the English perspective, of course—but they are poorly represented in archaeological work to date. As one way of overcoming the limitations of the historical records, I interpolate from ethnographic accounts, including later descriptions, to reconstruct the native system of beliefs and understanding, in the same way that historians have long reconstructed the English colonial world-view, in order to evaluate the actions that arose from those two very distinct orders. Certain Algonquian-speaking groups are better documented than others and can thus provide more material for comparison. The Delaware Indians, or Lenni-Lenape, inhabited the general area of the Delaware River valley, relatively near the Powhatans, and their language seems also to have been closely related to Powhatan, although there are also some obvious cultural differences. There are extensive missionary accounts of the Delawares from the eighteenth century and further sources from the seventeenth century. The Delawares' proximity and relative cultural closeness makes them a useful comparative case. Some of the New England Algonquians also provide comparative material. The Ojibwas of the Great Lakes area are also well documented; although their environment and thus some of their adaptations are quite different from the Powhatans, many aspects of their culture seem to be closely related. The same is true for other Algonquian-speaking groups. Certain southeastern tribes and Iroquois groups make useful comparative sources for selected aspects of Powhatan culture, but are generally less helpful for the issues of interest here.

In using such comparative material one of course cannot simply assume that, because one tribe employs certain practices or has certain beliefs, other related or neighboring tribes share them. The question of when to accept a comparison as valid is difficult and not one that can be resolved with certainty or subjected to scientific rigor. My decisions here are based not on any set of rules or guidelines but rather on subjective evaluations of interrelated points between the documented seventeenth-century Powhatan case and the various comparative sources. My evaluation of the Powhatan *huskanaw*, for example, is informed by knowledge of vision-quest rituals in other Algonquian-speaking groups. Passing comments and partial descriptions found in the documents of early Virginia fit with more extensive descriptions from other sources. These cannot be used to supply all of the missing details or to reconstruct a ritual completely, but they can be very

useful in "seeing through" the cultural biases of the early colonial accounts to get a better understanding of what the meanings of such events might have been in the Powhatan view. Such reconstructions are not likely to capture the exact intent and connotations of Powhatan beliefs and actions, but they provide a much more reliable approximation than either accepting the colonial accounts as given or resorting to generalized psychological models for their interpretation.

A variety of more recent historical studies have informed this research. Smith's captivity and especially his rescue by Pocahontas have attracted copious discussion, including Barbour (1964:158–69, 1970:18–27), Fausz (1977:233–38), Kidwell (1992:99–101), Mossiker (1976:73–88), and Rountree (1990:36–39). Each of these sources has some points I believe to be accurate, but none develops the interrelatedness of all of the events of that captivity, which is key to its proper understanding. Fausz (1977, 1979a, 1979b, 1981, 1985, 1988) has written extensively on Opechancanough and the 1622 coup. I disagree with some of his interpretations, but his works provide a thorough discussion of the conflicts involved in that event, as seen from the English perspective. Craven (1964) provides an excellent study of the causes and history of the dissolution of the Virginia Company in 1624. Bacon's Rebellion has prompted a number of interpretations, ranging from Wertenbaker (1940), who saw Bacon as a patriot and the rebellion as a precursor to the War for Independence, to Washburn (1957), who saw Bacon as a rebel who manipulated popular opinion to advance his own position.

In addition to these histories of specific events, a number of synthetic histories have been written for this period. At the end of the nineteenth century Philip Alexander Bruce compiled both an economic history (1895) and an institutional history (1910) of seventeenth-century Virginia. These works are still considered important compilations in the field. Craven (1970) also provides an historical overview emphasizing economic and political institutions and their roles in the histories of all of the southern colonies. More recently, McCusker and Menard (1985) have written a very detailed analysis of the economic developments of colonial America. Lurie (1959) was the first to consider the Powhatans' reaction to the English arrival. Kupperman (1980) examined the history of interaction in colonial Virginia in light of English perceptions, moving away from the overly simplistic model that English actions were rooted in an inherent imperialist racism that had come to typify writing on the colonial period (see Horsman 1982). Rountree (1990) has provided an excellent history of the Powhatans,

particularly noteworthy for its discussion of their history after the seventeenth century, and has edited a volume (1993a) of papers by several scholars on the relations between Powhatans and non-Powhatans.

Ethnographic studies of the Powhatan Indians began at the end of the nineteenth century. The first published was by Mooney (1907), in a study of the history of the Powhatan confederation that included notes on their present condition. Speck (1925, 1928) produced detailed contemporary ethnographies of the Rappahannocks and other Powhatan tribes. Mook and Stern, students of Speck, contributed ethnohistorical and ethnographic overviews (Mook 1943a, 1943b), an ethnography of the Chickahominies (Stern 1952), and a detailed study of Pamunkey pottery making that is essential to the interpretation of locally made pottery in the seventeenth century (Stern 1951). Rountree, who (1972a, 1972b, 1989, 1990) has studied the Powhatans for over two decades, provides an excellent synthesis of information. Ethnographic overviews are provided by the work of Swanton (1979) and Feest (1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1972, 1978, 1990) and can be supplemented by ethnographic accounts of other Algonquian groups, including those of New England and the Great Lakes region (see Trigger 1978) and the Delawares (Heckewelder 1876; Lindeström 1925; Loskiel 1794; Zeisberger 1910). Flannery (1939) provides a summary review of the documentation of many cultural traits for all coastal Algonquian peoples. Siebert (1975) has attempted some reconstruction of Powhatan linguistics, and Barbour (1971, 1972), Harrington (1955), and others have also analyzed the extant vocabularies. This can be augmented by judicious use of the research on Proto-Algonquian (Bloomfield 1946; Aubin 1975) and other Algonquian languages.

Excavations of major archaeological sites dating to this period are very few. Much of the town of Jamestown was excavated in the 1950s (Cotter 1958), but the materials have received little analysis. The site of the Jamestown fort, long thought to have eroded into the James River, has recently been located and is being excavated, a discovery that should greatly increase our knowledge of the period. A small settlement that was destroyed in the 1622 coup, Martin's Hundred, has been excavated, and a popular account published (Noël Hume 1982), and several houses in the Williamsburg area have been excavated and analyzed (Kelso 1984). A number of other, smaller, sites have been excavated but not yet analyzed and reported. Many of these collections are held at the Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks in Richmond, where they are available for study.

Synthetic studies by archaeologists, generally relying on both historical

and archaeological materials, are also available. In particular, the recent work of Mouer (1987, 1991; Mouer and Gleach 1984; Mouer, Woolley, and Gleach 1986), has focused on the changing social landscape of seventeenth-century Virginia. Deetz (1988) has also brought together historical and archaeological information, attempting to explain the changing relationships between English colonists and their African slaves in the later seventeenth century. Binford, E. R. Turner, and Potter all brought together ethnohistorical and archaeological information in studies of particular native cultural groups. Binford (1964) focused on cultural diversity in southern Virginia; E. R. Turner (1976) examined the question of social stratification among the Powhatans; and Potter (1982) studied the late prehistoric and early historic settlement patterns of the Chicacoans, an Algonquian-speaking group to the north of the Powhatans. E. R. Turner (1978, 1982, 1985, 1993) has continued his research with the Powhatans, and Potter (1993) has further developed his work on the peoples of the northern fringe of the Powhatans.

All of these sources can be applied to the reconstruction of the historic events of seventeenth-century Virginia both in terms of individual histories and actions and in terms of the contexts within which they took place. These reconstructions, consciously shaped to take into account the perspectives, goals, and methods of the actors, both native and colonial, will provide a more complete understanding of the cultural systems and their effects through interaction. The changes in attitudes and in political "realities" can be seen through the actions of the people living these cultures, once these actions are understood in terms of the cultural systems within which they occurred and had effect.

I begin this work by describing the cultural contexts within which these activities took place and received meaning. Chapter 1 involves considerable reconstruction of the native cultural order, through the use of historical documentation and comparison with other related peoples who have received more extensive ethnographic recording. Chapter 2 presents a similar reconstruction of key points of the contemporary English culture. The reader should not expect these two chapters to be exactly parallel; the critical institutions and their interrelationships differ markedly. Having presented the contexts, in chapters 3 through 8 I discuss the historical events of the colonial situation in early Virginia, in the terms laid out in this introduction and employing the perspectives developed in chapters 1 and 2. This discussion begins with the sporadic contacts of the early sixteenth century and continues through the aftermath of the second coup against

the colony, approximately 1646. Chapter 9 provides an overview of the relations between the Powhatans and the Virginia colony in the later seventeenth century, when the relationships worked out over the preceding decades became codified in law. The conclusion presents some of the implications and possible extrapolations of this research for the Powhatans and for the study of other groups.

Throughout this work I use the term *Powhatan* only as an adjective or as a singular noun referring to the specific person Powhatan; *Powhatans* refers to members of the group in plural. Traditionally, historians refer to Native Americans in plural form using an English-language plural, generally ending in *s* (i.e., *one Powhatan*, but *several Powhatans*), and anthropologists use the same form for singular and plural (i.e., one Powhatan, many Powhatan, or even the Powhatan, referring to the whole group). Problems can be noted for both plurals: an *-s* plural has no meaning in the native languages, and many ethnonyms are already plural forms to start with; but using the singular form promotes confusion, and perhaps seems to reify the group into an invariant monolithic entity (i.e., *the Powhatan grew corn*).[5] There is particular capacity for confusion in the Powhatan situation, where *Powhatan* is a specific individual name as well as the group reference, and I have chosen to use the *-s* plural form consistently to minimize possible confusion.

The reader should be forewarned that the text includes extensive quotations from the original documents. This is contrary to the common practice of paraphrasing rather than quoting, but I believe it is essential in a study such as this one, where I am attempting culturally sensitive interpretations of these documents, to allow the voices of the original authors to be heard, to tell their own stories. This is the closest we can get to the actors of colonial Virginia, Powhatan and English alike. In quoting early documents that have been transcribed and published I have regularized spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and italicization where necessary to reflect most accurately the original intent in a more readable form. Since no authoritative source would otherwise be readily available for comparison, unpublished manuscripts have been quoted as written; I have expanded the contractions that would have been typographically difficult to reproduce but have otherwise retained the original spelling and punctuation. In spelling Powhatan words and names I have tried to use spellings that most closely approximate current pronunciations.