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The Powhatan Chiefdom: 1606

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Previous page: The John Smith map of Virginia, published in England, 1612. North is on the right. The map shows almost 200 Native American settlements, Powhatan (upper left), Paramount Chief Powhatan, and a Susquehannock Native American described as the “goodliest man we ever beheld.”

OVERVIEW

North America was first settled by over 15,000 years ago. These “First Americans” were migrants from East Central Asia who crossed an isthmus then connecting Siberia and Alaska, ‘Beringia’ was exposed during the previous ice age and now lies submerged under the Bering Sea. Within a few thousand years humans found themselves inhabiting the eastern half of North America. These settlers of the eastern woodlands were the ancestors of several Native American tribes, including the Powhatan natives of Tidewater Virginia.

The colonization of North America by European empires shattered the complex cultures and destroyed the lives of thousands of Native Americans. This crisis simulation looks at the beginning of this period in Tidewater Virginia from the perspective of a Native American tribe. The following brief describes the Powhatan Native American perspective and gives some insight to the status of the Powhatans in 1606. The final few pages are biographies for each character in the simulation; these give delegates an understanding of who they portray, the tribes, and information about each character.

TSENACOMMACAH AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS

The powerful Powhatan tribe inhabited the area known as “*Tsenacommacah*”; the modern day Tidewater and Eastern Shore regions in Virginia. At the height of its power the Powhatan Chiefdom controlled all of the Eastern Shore and much of what today is eastern Virginia. The region extended east from the Fall Line, a north-south line of rock halting most traffic along the region’s rivers. Contemporary Fredericksburg and Richmond lie on the Fall Line. It included the Chesapeake Bay as far north as the Potomac River.

The Powhatans were the most powerful tribe in Virginia at the time, the largest in population and number of warriors. The population of the Powhatans was estimated by Thomas Jefferson in the 1770s as being about 8,000, but in more recent studies the population of the tribe is estimated to have been between 16,000 and 20,000 at their peak. The Powhatan Chiefdom had several administrative centers. These centers were based on large longhouses where the paramount chief could live and rule the tribe. John Smith recorded in his map of Tsenacommacah the three Powhatan capitals of Werowocomoco (the capital in use at the time of English arrival in 1607), Orapax, and Powhatan (the village from which the tribe and its leader took their names).¹

Pre-colonial Virginia was a meeting place for three major language and culture groups. As a result tensions were high between many tribes in Virginia. The Powhatans were bordered by

¹ Smith, John. 1612. *A Map of Virginia: With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion*. London: Oxford Press.

mostly non-Algonquin tribes. To the west from the fall line lived the Monacan tribe, one of two main rival tribes. The Monacans were from the Siouan language/cultural group. Several wars had been fought between the two tribes. Upon English arrival to Tsenacommacah the Powhatans told the English of previous wars and key battles fought against the Monacans, and even attempted to convince the English to assist them in a war against the Monacans. In 1656 just that happened, and a joint force of Powhatan and English troops attacked a coalition of Siouan native tribes which included the Monacans. The Monacan tribe is located in the piedmont region of Virginia and is surrounded by other Siouan tribes, meaning that they were on fairly friendly terms with most of their neighbors.

To the Southwest of the Powhatans lived a pocket of tribes that were members of the Iroquoian language/cultural family. Out of the two main tribes in the area the Powhatans interacted most with the Nottoway tribe. The Nottoway tribe was far smaller than their neighbors and was not “discovered” by the English until around 1650, and their population was around 500 people. The Iroquoian tribes to the south of the Powhatans were not their largest threat; the Monacans were the focus of most aggression. Some of the larger tribes to the south of the Powhatans were friendly towards the Powhatans because they were Algonquin speakers. The larger of the southern tribes were the Croatan and the Roanoke tribes, who were most likely allied to each other. To the north the Powhatans had powerful Algonquin brothers, the Piscataway tribe, who ruled much of modern day Washington D.C. and much of the northern Chesapeake Bay.²

THE CHIEFDOM

For decades the Powhatans were viewed as a confederacy, but more recently the idea that the tribe was instead a paramount chiefdom has become widely accepted. Chiefdom is defined by Robert L. Carneiro as being “An autonomous political unit comprising [of] a number of villages or communities under the permanent control of a paramount chief”.³

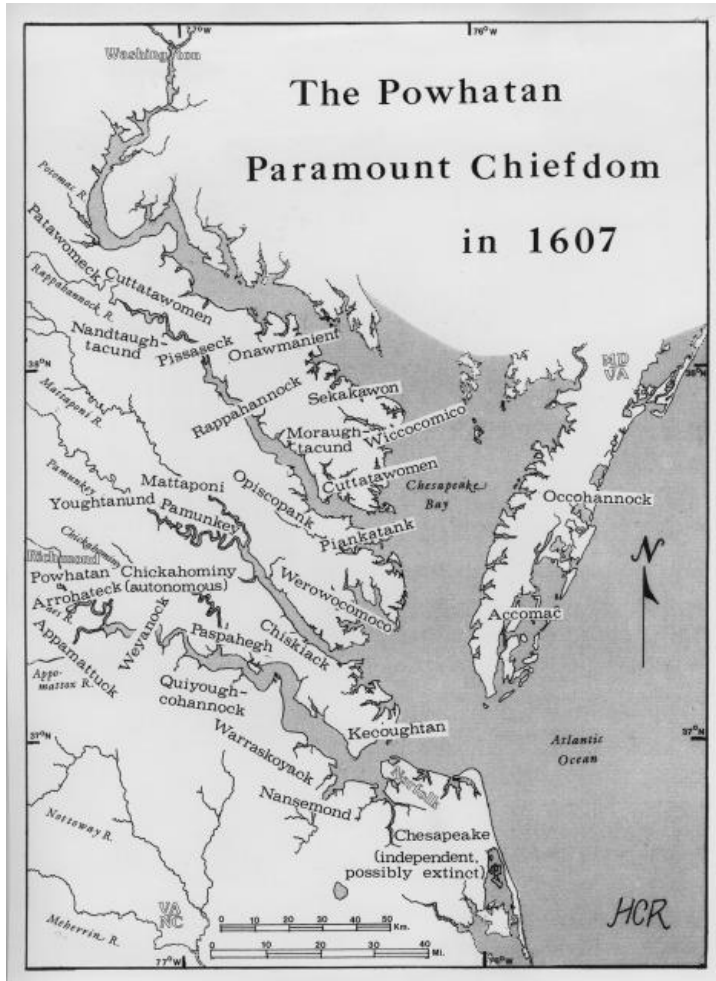
The paramount chief, or “*Mamanatowick*”, is selected based on an elder hierarchy within the ruling family. This meant that both men and women could rule as chiefs; age is all that matters. In Powhatan society governmental power is divided further into local levels. Each tribe in the chiefdom had its own “*werowance*”. These werowances were the rulers of their own tribes, and were either born into power in the tribe or was placed into power by Powhatan after the conquering of the tribe. These Werowances exercise quite a bit of autonomy, and control nearly every aspect of their own tribes. Werowances pay tribute to the paramount chief in order to stay in favor with the chief. The English set the amount of tribute paid to 80 percent but that number has been widely disregarded by historians. Some tribes in the chiefdom never allowed a werowance to be installed by Powhatan, these tribes included the Chickahominy (They were

² Goddard, Ives. 1997. “Eastern Algonquin Languages.” *Handbook of North American Indians: Languages Vol. 17*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

³ Carneiro, Robert L. 1982. “The Chiefdom: Precursor of the State,” *The Transition to Statehood in the New World*. London: Cambridge University Press.

ruled instead by “*mungai*”, a council of elders and priests), and the Accomac who were ruled by their own chief, Debedeavon. Each tribe in addition to their werowances had a position that the

Map of Tsenacommacah and the Powhatan Chiefdom



Map by Helen C. Rountree

English described as a captain, or a war chief. War chiefs could also be the werowance, but were usually experienced and well regarded warriors in the tribe. The difference between these two positions is that the peacetime chief, or werowance, position cannot be earned; it was entirely decided by bloodlines, while a war chief was awarded their position based on achievements and bravery. The division of powers between these two positions is similar to how other Algonquin tribes were governed by a dual system of chiefs.

The werowance was more known as the peacetime chief and dealt with the administration of the tribe mostly, and the war chief's responsibilities dealt, of course, with wartime efforts and interaction with unfriendly outside tribes. Both the war chief and the werowance would lead warriors in battle however. For examples of a werowance and his/her war chief one can look at

the most powerful chief and war chief in the chiefdom. Powhatan was the paramount chief, basically a massive werowance, and Opechancanough was his war chief. Though Opechancanough was Powhatan's brother and the werowance of another tribe, the Pamunky, he had earned his position as war chief by being the most feared, beloved, and respected warrior in the chiefdom.⁴

THE PARAMOUNT CHIEF POWHATAN

Chief Powhatan ruled nearly 20,000 people spread over 30 lesser tribes by the time of European contact. He was Paramount Chief of the Powhatan Chiefdom until his death in 1618. Powhatan inherited the chiefdom with 6 tribes, and by the time the Europeans arrived Powhatan dominated over more than 30. His empire encompassed nearly the entire Tidewater region of Virginia, the Eastern Shore, and parts of Western Maryland. Chief Powhatan was born to the werowance of the village Powhatan near modern day Richmond, Virginia on the banks of the Pamunky River with the birth name Wahunsunacawh. When he inherited the previous chief's lands the chiefdom was made up of six original tribes: the Powhatan, Arrohattoc, Appomattoc, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and the Chiskiack. The rest of the members of the chiefdom were either added by coercion or by conquest by Powhatan. The last tribe added to the chiefdom was the Piankatank in 1608, and they were added by force. Chief Powhatan took a peaceful approach to the English with few exceptions until his death. John Smith was captured by Chief Powhatan's brother, war advisor, and future paramount chief Opechancanough and was brought before Chief Powhatan in May of 1607. From that point on Powhatan kept diplomacy a constant between the colonists and his people.⁴

CULTURE

Native Americans are divided by experts based upon the language/culture group that each tribe identifies with. Examples of two of the largest of these groups would be the Iroquoian language group and the Siouan language group. The Powhatans were members of the Algonquin language and culture family. Algonquin is a subfamily of, but encompasses most of, the Algic language family. Some of the largest tribes belonging to the Algonquin language family include the Powhatans, the Cree, the Ojibwa, the Narragansett, and the Cheyanne. Tribes belonging to this language family are located throughout central and eastern Canada, the northeastern coast of the USA from North Carolina to all of Maine, and pockets of Algonquin speakers can be found in the plains and in much of the area surrounding the Great Lakes. The Algonquin family is further split into three main groups: Eastern, Central, and Plains Algonquin. The Powhatan natives spoke their own dialect within the Eastern Algonquin subgroup known as Powhatan Algonquin. Major characteristics of the Algonquin language is that many phrases and entire thoughts can easily be expressed using only one word. Algonquin, like all non-Mesoamerican languages of North America was purely a spoken language; there was no written form of the

⁴ Gleach, Frederic W. 1997. *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia*. Bloomington: University of Nebraska Press.

language before the arrival of the Europeans. This means that the written version of the language often has long and seemingly complex words when in reality it is just phonetically spelled and was never meant to be written down².

Major elements of the Powhatan tribe's culture are shared with most tribes in the Algonquin cultural family. The three major points of their culture that was shared was their perception and execution of war, trade, and how they subsisted.

WAR

In Algonquin society war was waged entirely differently than any European culture. Powhatan warriors revered cunning and stealth far more than brawn. Algonquin warfare was described as using "stratagems, surprises, and treacheries" by William Strachey and other English observers⁵. In 1608 the Powhatans attacked and conquered a tribe called the Piankatank, and during this battle the English observed and recorded Powhatan war tactics. The battle began by a few men entering the village pretending to be travelers seeking refuge for a night in the town after a day's hunt. Once the town was infiltrated by the disguised warriors a signal was given during the night and the attack was quietly launched. The larger party of men in the woods surrounding the village then assaulted, sneaking into the huts of warriors and surprise attacked the village. After all of the warriors of the town were either killed or had fled, the women and children as well as the werowance were taken captive and presented to Powhatan. These survivors would be assimilated into the group of conquerors that were meant to then live in the occupied village. Ambushes and surprise attacks are the corner stone of Algonquin war tactics⁴.

This is not limited to the Powhatans either. A fantastic example of ambush tactics by an Algonquin culture was by the Ojibwa Tribe in British Canada. In 1763 the Ojibwa tribe was forced by British troops to play a ball game against another local tribe for the amusement of the British forces at Fort Michilimackinac for King George III's 25th birthday⁴; The story was described in detail by William W. Warren in his "History of the Ojibways, based upon traditions and oral statements". "His soldiers stood carelessly unarmed... intermingling with the Indian woman, who... carrying under their blankets the weapons which were to be used in the approaching work of death". During the ball game a player on the Ojibwa team threw the ball, supposedly on accident, towards the native women who were near the entrance to the fort. All of the players then rushed to the women pretending that they were chasing the ball. The women however had smuggled weapons into the fort underneath their blankets; the men then armed themselves and attacked the unarmed and careless soldiers in the fort. The commander was taken captive and his men were all killed⁶.

In one of the most famous and well documented attacks on colonists in history the Powhatans put their war tactics against the English during the, English named, Indian Massacre of 1622. In this infamous attack on Jamestown and its surrounding colonies the natives used the same tactics as they used when attacking other Native American villages. They entered Jamestown's markets and businesses pretending to want to trade. Then simultaneously they

⁵ Strachey, William. 1953. *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* [1612] London: Hakluyt Society. 109

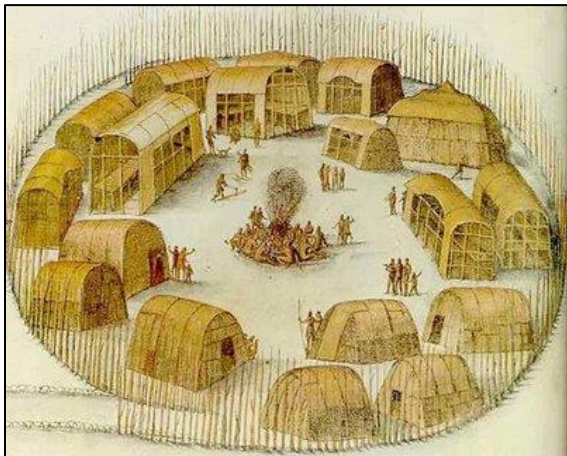
⁶ Warren, William W. 1984. *History of the Ojibway People* [1885]. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press.

grabbed the nearest weapon and killed whoever they could. By the end of it one third of Jamestown's population was killed, and a number of smaller outposts were completely destroyed. What is certain of the Algonquin method of warfare is that it gets astounding results when used against unsuspecting colonists. Rather than lining together in battle formations and fighting the enemy on an even field the Algonquin warriors use cunning strategy and trickery to win battles quickly, which makes the stealthy guerrilla tactics perfect against the Europeans.

Wars in Algonquin society were most often started as punitive measures, Algonquin tribes, and Powhatans especially, went to war for poetic justice. If a member of another tribe was to harm or torture (torture was looked at in a different light in Native American cultures and was far more accepted) a member of the Powhatans then a war to punish would likely follow. This sense of justice was shown early on in Jamestown's history. During one of the first few harsh winters the town ran out of food. A few of the colonists tried to sneak into a nearby Powhatan village and steal bread. They were caught, killed, and when their bodies were discovered they had bread shoved into their mouths. During the westward expansion of the USA several accounts of attacks on settlers who were aggressively taking the land of the natives ended with the colonist dead with soil filling their mouths, giving the settlers exactly what they wanted. This call to war or violence as an act of retaliation was incredibly important in the Algonquin perception of war⁴.

Diplomacy with the Powhatans was mainly practiced through the practice of diplomatic marriages. Sons or daughters are married off to werowances or members of their families to bind the two families together. This practice was used to end the First Anglo-Powhatan War. In 1613 one of Powhatan's daughters, Pocahontas, was captured by the English and kept prisoner in Jamestown. A marriage was arranged between Pocahontas and colonist John Rolfe, with Powhatan's consent, to end the war through diplomatic marriage. Because of the marriage the First Anglo-Powhatan War ended and the Powhatans and the English began a brief peace. This was done even though Pocahontas already had a Powhatan husband, his name was Kocoum.⁷

LIFESTYLE



A Powhatan Village, depicted
by John Smith

⁷ Rountree, Helen C. 1993. *Powhatan Foreign Relations, 1500-1722*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Powhatan lifestyle reflected that of other Algonquin tribes. Powhatan societies survived and thrived based on three main food sources: deer and other small wild game, fishing, and small amounts of agriculture. Deer was hunted unsustainably by the Powhatans, this was because deer pelts were seen as a status symbol; the more pelts you have and wear the more food you have, and that in Native American society means wealth. This is because the Native Americans lacked a formal currency and therefore a barter system was used instead. The hunting of deer was a ceremonial event for the Powhatans. When done alone and successfully it is seen as a great act and shows the skill of the hunter. But the most effective way for a deer hunt to feed an entire village was with large hunting parties. One hunting tactic in particular that was especially effective was that a large group of hunters would track deer, and once a large number was found the hunters would spread out in every direction surrounding the deer. Once the deer were surrounded, the woods in a circle around the deer was set on fire. As the fire further approached the center of the circle the less places deer had to hide. The hunt ends once each deer in the circle is killed, and the deer killed are shared among the village. Although hunting tactics like this made hunting a good source of food, fishing was a far more reliable food source and fish were the staple of the Powhatan's diet. Nets and simple fishing poles were used both from the banks of and from in canoes on the many rivers, creeks, and larger bodies of water in the tidewater region. Tidewater Virginia has an astonishing amount of water, which makes the fact that the Powhatans mainly subsisted on fish an entirely understandable one. Agriculture in Powhatan society was based on three main crops: corn, wheat, and tobacco. Corn is a reliable food source that is easy to keep dried and able to eat during the winter time. The same is to be said for wheat, which can be made into bread to preserve the crop. The Powhatans practiced an agricultural system close to modern slash and burn agriculture. They would clear an area by chopping down a stretch of woods and used fire to clear the ground of stumps and smaller plants. After clearing the land a group would live on that plot of land, fishing, hunting, and farming on the land. This would continue until the inhabitants had either depleted the fish and game or the soil, and then they would simply move to another plot and start it all over again. The soil of much of the tidewater region is fairly weak when looking for good larger scale agriculture and the growing of tobacco sped the depletion process. Tobacco was a ceremonial crop and even currency for the Powhatans. Tobacco was smoked by all ages ceremoniously, smoking tobacco was used when striking a deal, as a gesture of friendship, as a way to greet guests in the evening, and tobacco itself was often used as a trade good. Sir Walter Raleigh was the first European to bring tobacco back to England and presented it to Queen Elizabeth's court upon his return. Cultivation of tobacco in the Jamestown colony began when colonist John Rolfe developed a practice to cultivate tobacco on a larger scale. This cultivation of tobacco became the lifeline of the Virginia colony and made its survival much more possible⁸.

Religion for the Powhatans followed a dual system like most other Algonquin tribes did. There were two sets of spirits or supernatural forces that existed, and one of these entities the Powhatans made tributes to appease and the other was the good great god. The god Ahone was the creator of the sun, moon, and the stars, and this was the great do not need to pay tribute to

⁸ Rountree, Helen C. 1992. *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture*. Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press

because he is already looking for people's best interests. The second major god, Okee, was the god that was seen as not as good, but having some redeeming traits¹⁰. This god was appeased with tribute by the Powhatans, and they feared Okee in nearly every possibly bad situation. These sacrifices made to Okee were not seen as worship by the Powhatans, but instead keeping the balance of the world. Ahone was praised by the Powhatans by worshiping lesser spirits beneath him called a *Manitoac*. Manitoac are the spirits who oversee specific sections of nature, such as trees or fish or the deer. Men or women who become close with nature and are closely linked with a Manitoac are known as *Quioccosuks*. A Quioccosuk is relatable to a lesser god because of how righteous they are. The way one becomes a Quioccosuk is by completing a process called the *Huskanaw*. The ceremony was a vision quest like event, and was how young men could establish a deeper connection with the supernatural world in order to use powers otherwise unattainable. The ceremony begins with a massive feast and dance, then the young men were forced to run an obstacle course three times and at the end lay down and play dead. The older men of the village would then carry the boys into the woods and leave them there for several months. They were to be alone and receive no outside help unless they required detoxing. After nine months the boys would return to the village and be reborn as men because through all of their hardship they forgot their youth. Every werowance must go through this process, the same for each priest. It is through this process that they acquire their closeness with the Manitoac, which gives them the right to hold power⁴.



"A Powhatan idol, Kiwasa, also served as the guardian of royal corpses" from the Library of Congress.

¹⁰ Aveni, Anthony F. 2012. "Beginnings and Ends: Of the Maya and the Milky Way, Powhatans and the Giant Hare, Prophecies and Time" *Colonial Williamsburg Journal Autumn 2012*. Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Journal.

TRADE

The Native American, more specifically Algonquin, perception of trade is entirely different from what is common today, and from how the English viewed trade at the time of contact. The Native Americans used a barter system as their form of currency for thousands of years. They traded tobacco, pelts, foods, and really anything that could be of use to them. The Native Americans were not in trade to make a profit, instead all that mattered to them during trading is that the trade as *fair*. This completely went against the English and more general European model of trade where you try and make as much profit as possible while giving up as little as you can. These two contracting ways of trade lead to the Native Americans at the beginning of their trade interactions with the English being taken advantage of and cheated out of large amounts of goods in search of a “fair” deal. John Smith during an early trade with Chief Powhatan would use language to spice up his goods to make them seem far more valuable than reality. For example he could call a common metal helmet a metal helmet that was specially crafted for kings, and because the Powhatans were unfamiliar with these goods they believed the English⁴.

Many tribes affiliated with the chiefdom fostered trade partner like relations with the colonists. The tribes on the Eastern Shore were far friendlier with the English than those on mainland Tsenacommacah, and many tribes on the northern end of the Chiefdom, mainly the Potomac and affiliated tribes, were important trade partners with the English. In the beginning of Jamestown the Powhatans did trade with the colonists, but nearly all of these were for food for the colony in exchange for things like copper. Without this early trade relationship the colony would have surely failed. For several winters and even during some of the easier to live in seasons the Jamestown colony was on the brink of starvation. The survival of the colony is almost entirely because of key trade resources from the Native Americans.

EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND COLONIZATION



Portugese Explorer Estêvão Gomes' map of the Americas, 1529.

The Algonquin natives of the 'New World' were encountered by European explorers as early as the arrival of explorers in Northeast Canada in the early Sixteenth Century. The Powhatans most likely encountered European explorers in Tsenacommacah long before Jamestown was settled.

The coastline of Tsenacommacah was explored by the Italian Giovanni da Verrazzano, who was hired by France and explored from Cape Fear, North Carolina, north to Maine in 1524. Portuguese explorer Estêvão Gomes, hired by Spain, sailed north from Cuba to Nova Scotia in 1525. From this expedition a fairly accurate map of the eastern coast of the new world was made. This map included a tributary towards the southern coast that would most likely be Tsenacommacah.

The Spanish named the area *Ajacán*. From 1525 until the 1580s Spanish slavers would ransack the area occasionally. In 1570 a Spanish Jesuit named Father Juan Bautista de Segura attempted to set up a mission, now dubbed the Ajacán Mission. The mission was destroyed by the natives and only one child escaped alive. The surviving child, named Alonso Olmos, was saved by a resupply ship captained by Spain's Florida colony Governor Pedro Menéndez Márquez. After hearing the child's account of the attack and destruction of the mission Menéndez returned to Tsenacommacah in 1573 to take revenge on the natives. Upon arrival the

Spanish forces hanged eight natives after accusing them of being the ones who attacked the Mission. While in the region Menéndez then explored the Chesapeake Bay extensively for the Spanish. Afterwards Tsenacommacah was left alone for about 18 years, and in 1585 an English expedition lead by Sir Walter Raleigh established the Roanoke Colony. After the first attempt at Roanoke was found to have been deserted in July of 1587 a second Roanoke colony was built on the same island. It was in this settlement that Virginia Dare was born; she was the first English child born in the Americas. Later on in 1587 the Roanoke colonists which numbered 115 at this point, persuaded their leader Captain John White to return to England to explain the dire situation of the colony and to seek help. He left in 1587, but could not return to the island until 1590 because the Anglo-Spanish War had exhausted any vessels that White could have used to return. Upon his return the colony was completely abandoned. All that was left on the site was the word “Croatan” carved onto a fence post. This was the name of a nearby Algonquin speaking tribe⁹.

All of these voyages to Tsenacommacah by Europeans and the large amounts of interaction between the Native Americans and the Europeans meant that it is nearly impossible for the Powhatans to have not encountered Europeans before the founding of Jamestown in 1607. In fact it is likely that the Algonquin natives of Tsenacommacah had already met French, Spanish, and English expeditions. This means that it was very possible that some of the Powhatans already spoke some English, and that through the English’s interactions with fellow Algonquin natives just south of the chiefdom the Powhatans were already somewhat familiar with the English’s technology, culture, and how they looked. Also because the Spanish and French had just as much, in the case of the Spanish perhaps more, knowledge of the area as the English did Tsenacommacah could have easily been colonized by the French or the Spanish instead of the English.

This point brings the question, how would the colonization by another country have changed how the natives reacted or were treated? Well that depends. The French used the Native Americans as allies and trade partners. In 1608 Montreal was founded and immediately the French created friendly relations with the surrounding Algonquin tribes and established them as trade partners. The French colonies were based on fur trapping and greatly profited on the trade of furs, which were in extremely high demand in Europe. The French were also friendlier when it came to the attempted conversion of the Native Americans. This was because the Native Americans were their business partners and the income of the colony directly reflected the relationship that the French colonists kept with the Native Americans. If the Native Americans were angry at the French then they would not trade their furs for the metal goods the French had, which would kill profits. The Spanish colonies were based around finding goods like spices, gold, or silver to ship back to Europe for immediate profits. The Spanish were especially cruel towards the Native Americans; they enslaved large numbers, forcibly converted, took their lands, violently conquered, and simply took whatever resource they wanted (especially gold). The English were like a mix of the two. The English seized lands and fought wars with the Natives, but they also tried to trade with the natives (even though the trades were often incredibly unfair)

⁹ Mooney, James. 1907. “The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present” *American Anthropologist* Vol. 9 No. 1 New York: American Anthropological Society.

and the English also did find allies with a few tribes. The English colonies revolved around certain cash crops. At the beginning of the Virginia colony it was Tobacco, then as the colonies grew cotton and dye production increased, as well as shipbuilding in the north and timber throughout.

JAMESTOWN

English depiction of Opechancanough being taken captive by John Smith, 1609



Jamestown was founded by an expedition funded by the Virginia Company led by Captain John Smith and Captain Christopher Newport. Jamestown is located on the James River just a few miles west of modern day Newport News, Virginia.

From their arrival the colonists never intended on growing their own food, instead they relied entirely on trade with the Powhatans or hunting. As a result food was scarce and when relations with the Powhatans deteriorated it left the colony on the brink of collapse. The colonists went through one of the harshest winters even seen at Jamestown in the winter of 1609-1610; this time period is known as “The Starving Time”. Forensic evidence has shown that not only did the colonists turn to eating pets like dogs and cats, but also horses, rats, and in one case cannibalism occurred. Only 50 of the colony’s original 500 colonists survived; 80 percent of the colony had died that one winter. The survivors of the starving time briefly abandoned the fort until they were intercepted by a resupply ship near the mouth of the James River.

The English enjoyed mostly friendly relations with Chief Powhatan the first few years of its existence. This was most likely because the chief did not understand just how weak the colony was at its beginning. If the Powhatans had refused one shipment of food then the colony would have absolutely failed. In the difficult first years a large number of colonists actually defected and left to live among the Powhatans. Because of how the Powhatans treated conquered individuals (they would simply relocate them and let them live among the Powhatans) defecting to them was an enticing opportunity.

The First Anglo-Powhatan war broke out in 1610 beginning the utter deterioration of relations. In August 1610 the colonists sent about 75 warriors to attack the Paspehegh tribe who lived just downstream from Jamestown. The town was slaughtered and the family of Wowinchopunk, the werowance, including his wife and several of his children. On the way back to Jamestown the colonists threw the children into the James River and shot them. Upon their return to Jamestown the colonists executed Wowinchopunk's wife¹⁰. The Paspehegh then abandoned their original location and moved further into Powhatan territory. The killing of the family of a werowance is an ultimate offense to Algonquin cultures. This offense fueled the Powhatan war effort and for three more years war waged between both sides. By then end of the war in 1614 the Powhatans had lost much of their land on the James River, and the chief's brother Opechancanough grew immensely in popularity because of his bravery in battle, and because of his open opposition of the English from their arrival.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

This committee will be a council of werowances and select war chiefs meeting at Werowocomoco in Paramount Chief Wahunsunacawh's (Powhatan's) manor in 1606. The meeting was convened by Powhatan for the yearly feast where the Werowances present Powhatan with their tribute. During the feast the werowances will meet with Chief Powhatan in private to discuss matters of the chiefdom. Here they will answer any immediate threats, draft up plans on dealing with their rival tribes, and make preparations for the upcoming year. The first topics of discussion were set by the Paramount Chief to be the possibility of war with the Monacans and of an alliance with the Piscataway. Each delegate will be either a werowance or a war chief from a tribe. This means each delegate has control over their own tribe and will exercise a good level of autonomy and authority within their tribes. The main topics of the committee will be presented to you via crisis updates. Even though the Powhatans did not have a written language we will still be using the average crisis committee model for ease. Directives and notes will be written just like any other committee. Racism will not be tolerated, and yes calling Native Americans "Indians" and wearing an "Indian" costume is racist. When it comes to research check out some of the sources in the bibliography, and also look around on the internet for good sources. An issue that one could run into is that their character didn't show up in a google search, but don't worry. For each character there is listed everything one would need to know about them. Research should instead be pointed to things like the tribe the werowance is from, Powhatan – European relations, and possible ideas for during the committee.

¹⁰ Strachey, William. 1953. *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* [1612] London: Hakluyt Society.

CHARACTER LIST

- **Parahunt**, Werowance of Powhatan: Parahunt is the son of Paramount Chief Powhatan, but he is not in line to take over the chiefdom. Because of the tribe's matrilineal society the line of succession moves down age groups from the mother. Parahunt was always aware of this, but also aware of the power that his name holds in his father's chiefdom. As a result of knowing that power will never be simply passed to him Parahunt has been seeking to make himself a dominant player in the tribe. Ambition is Parahunt's strongest suit, and any chance that he sees to gain glory in battle he takes. Most of this hunger for power is pointed towards the Monacan, and Parahunt thinks that if a war should break out between the Powhatans and the Monacans he can find his name there. The Powhatan village is the birthplace of Chief Powhatan and is the core territory of the tribe.
- **Debedeavon**, Paramount Chief of the Accohannock and the Accomac: Debedeavon is the paramount chief of the Eastern Shore tribes, and because of their geographic separation from the rest of the Powhatan Chiefdom the tribes of the eastern shore enjoy relative independence. Debedeavon has encountered several times from his position on the Eastern Shore massive mysterious canoes being towed by clouds. He does not understand who these people are but he realizes their possible might, and wishes to be as close to their leaders as possible.
- **Ashuaguid**, Werowance of Arrohattoc: The Arrohattoc tribe and village is located just south of the village of Powhatan, and the tribe is one of the six original tribes of the chiefdom. This membership to the original club means that this tribe wields more power within the chiefdom and with Powhatan himself than some further out tribes. This also means that their Werowance, Ashuaguid, is incredibly loyal and has the trust of Powhatan, something held by few people. Ashuaguid is allowed to act more independently from Powhatan than other werowances, and advise chief Powhatan personally.
- **Coquonasum**, Werowance of Appomattock: The Appomattoc are such a large sub-tribe that the several villages inside had to be broken between several werowances. They are also one of the six original tribes of the chiefdom. Coquonasum is one of the werowances of the Appomattoc tribe, and specifically the werowance of the large village Wighwhippoc, located on the north bank of the river the village is named for. His sister, Opussoquionuske, is the werowansqua of another Appomattoc village. Coquonasum is incredibly hostile to foreigners, and refuses diplomacy with non-Powhatans. This has led to Coquonasum being one of the loudest voices in support of war with the Monacans, and of abandoning any diplomacy with outside groups.
- **Opussoquionuske**, Werowansqua of Appomattock: Opussoquionuske is another leader within the Appomattoc tribe, and the werowansqua of the main village. She is a favorite

of Chief Powhatan, and is often tasked with specific missions on the behalf of Powhatan. Many of these tasks include diplomatic missions to tribes to the south of the chiefdom. She maintains a diplomatic relationship with the Croatan and the Roanoke tribes.

- **Kaquothiscun**, Werowance of Weyanock: The Weyanock tribe is situated to the east of the Appomattock tribe and stretches on both shores of the James River. Kaquothiscun has known Powhatan since they were children, and following the conquest of the Weyanock tribe Powhatan appointed Kaquothiscun the werowance. Since he was appointed his family has grown tenfold, and his diplomatic power has thus doubled. Because of the power of diplomatic marriages in the Chiefdom, Kaquothiscun's family has the possibility of becoming connected to many major houses and tribes outside of the Powhatans.
- **Pepiscumah (Pipisco)**, Werowance of the Quiyoughcohannock: Pepiscumah is the werowance of the Quiyoughcohannock tribe, located just down the James River from the Weyanock. Quiyoughcohannock's main village of the same name is known throughout the Chiefdom as the spiritual capital of Tsenacommacah. It is here that the families of werowances and priests go to participate in a *huskanaw* ceremony. Once this grueling ceremony is completed if the participant survived and finished all of the tasks and tests that are to become a *quioccosuk*, or a lesser god, as a result from their near perfection. Pepiscumah is, fittingly, an extremely spiritual man. He receives visions from several *Manitoac* (Spirits of most elements and parts of nature, associated with goodness) beginning after he completed his huskanaw ceremony and emerged as a Quioccosuk. Whenever he receives a vision the chiefdom and its inhabitants take it as law.
- **Tackonekintaco**, Werowance of Warraskoyack: The Warraskoyack tribe is located on the Pagan River where it meets the James River, near modern day Smithfield. The tribe is the breadbasket of the tribe, and the fields of the several villages produce unheard of amounts of corn. Tackonekintaco manages all of the food the villages produce, and therefore controls all of the surplus food for the tribe.
- **Weyhohomo**, Werowance of Nansemond: The Nansemond tribe is located in modern day Suffolk and Chesapeake near the bay. The werowance Weyhohomo is in charge of one of the largest subtribes in the chiefdom. He was what many people would call paranoid. Weyhohomo has enormous caches of weapons, food, and necessities like clothing or materials for shelters stored in his main village in case of an emergency.
- **Wowinchopunk**, Werowance of Paspehegh: Located on a peninsula sticking into the James River (the site of Jamestown) are the villages of the Paspehegh. The tribe was conquered by Powhatans and Wowinchopunk was kept as the werowance because of the Paramount Chief's deep respect for the werowance. Wowinchopunk grew into fame as a renounced scout. He and his warriors are proficient in the art of scouting, and is often the first to know of incoming events and dangers.

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- **Pochins**, Werowance of Kecoughtan: Pochins is a son of Paramount Chief Powhatan, and is the werowance of the Kecoughtan, located on the tip of the Virginia Peninsula. Pochins has through years spent in the wilderness around his village become a master of stealth, trickery, and subterfuge. This knowledge he has passed down to his two sons, and also several prominent and promising warriors of the village. Pochins and his sons are seen as the single best spies in the chiefdom, and therefore are usually the ones sent to infiltrate villages and gather sensitive information to be delivered to the Paramount Chief or to use for their personal gains.
- **Attossomunch**, War Chief of the Chickahominy: The Chickahominy tribe is one of the strongest in the chiefdom, and the only tribe strong and large enough to remain autonomous within the chiefdom. The Chickahominy never allowed Chief Powhatan to install a werowance to rule over them, and instead they are ruled by their own peace chief, war chief Attossomunch, and their council of elders. Attossomunch became famous for his bravery and skill as a warrior during the previous Monacan war. He and his personal warriors created a cult of the tomahawk. This group was founded in and is based in Chickahominy, and is the destination of the top warriors of the chiefdom. Here they train together, and act as brothers. Attossomunch is the de facto leader of the group.
- **Ottahotin**, Werowance of Chiskiak: Located between the Paspehegh and the Kecoughtan tribes is the Chiskiak tribe. This tribe is one of the original core territories for the chiefdom. The tribe is located on the site where the Spanish Ajacán mission was attempted. When the men returned for revenge they hanged 8 Chiskiak, including Ottahotin's uncle. The killing of a family member of the then werowance is an unforgivable offense, and Ottahotin seeks furiously for revenge. When Ottahotin had heard that the Croatan has encountered white men he envied their opportunity to destroy them in a war.
- **Ottondeacommoc**, Werowance of Moraughtacund: On the north bank of the Rappahannock River is the Moraughtacund tribe. Its werowance Ottondeacommoc became known to Powhatan as a master crafter. He himself created Powhatan's clothing and his personal bow, arrows, and more importantly Powhatan's staff. His staff is said to be so perfectly crafted that the *Manitoac* watching over the wood it was made from is partly embodied in it. He did such a phenomenal job at creating Powhatan's personal things that to show his gratitude Powhatan appointed Ottondeacommoc as werowance. Werowances and respected warriors travel to his tribe to have him create their weapons, for a fair trade of course.
- **Wayamat**, Werowance of Kaposecocke: Kaposecocke is the largest village of the Pamunkey tribe and is located on the York River. The village is a part of the greater Pamunkey tribe which is one of the six original core Powhatan areas. Kaposecocke is known as a transportation hub in the chiefdom. Traders and travelers go to the village to find a guide for their travels, and to find the best roads to the several capitals of the chiefdom. Therefore Wayamat controls much of the flow of the chiefdom.

- **Attasquintan**, Werowance of Pamareke: Another village within the Pamunkey tribe located on the York River with the rest of the Pamunkey tribe. The village is in the original core territory of the Powhatans, and is the center for movement into the Monacan's territory. The werowance Attasquintan is the main diplomatic link between the Monacans, and is one of the few Powhatans permitted to move freely between Monacan and Powhatan lands.
- **Nansuapunk**, Werowance of the Pattawomeck (Potomac): The Pattawomecks are located on the southern bank of the Potomac River, and is the trade capital of the chiefdom. Traders from the Piscataway tribe and from other major tribes to the north of the Powhatans meet in the Pattawomeck's main village to trade their goods into the chiefdom, and from the Pattawomeck the goods are traded to the rest of the chiefdom. Therefore the tribe and its werowance control the supply of many goods to the chiefdom. Nansuapunk is a man of profit, and sometimes greed, and his goal is unlike the common perspective of fairness, he is only looking to gain material wealth.
- **Kittamaquund**, Werowance of the Doeg: The Doeg tribe is located the furthest north of any of Powhatan's lands in modern day Fairfax, Virginia. The tribe is very closely connected with the Piscataway tribe above them. So close that rumors that Kittamaquund is just as loyal to the Piscataways as to the Powhatans. But the Doeg's close relationship with the Piscataway is certainly a bonus for the Powhatans to have. Kittamaquund is the tribe's main diplomatic connection to the Piscataway, and maintains a diplomatic relationship with their chief.
- **Pomiscatuck**, Werowance of the Youghtamund: The Youghtamund tribe is located down the York River from the Pamunkey tribe. Its werowance Pomiscatuck is a master navigator and explorer. He is one of the few Powhatans to have ventured beyond Monacan lands. He is an expert navigator, and therefore can maneuver any amount of people through most terrains successfully.
- **Werowough**, Werowance of the Mattaponi: The Mattaponi tribe is one of the six original tribes of the chiefdom, and is located on the Mattaponi River just north of the Pamunkey tribe. The Mattaponi's main village is where the most abundant game forests are. Scores of deer live in and around Mattaponi's villages, and as a result nearly every member of the tribe, including the werowance Werowough, are renowned hunters. Some of the most skilled trackers in the chiefdom live here, and this is where some of the best archers in the chiefdom live. Werowough himself is considered the best archer in the tribe.
- **Vropaack**, Werowance of the Nantaughtacund: The Nantaughtacund tribe acts as Powhatan's administrative center in the north of the chiefdom. It is located between the Rappahannock and Pattawomeck tribes, and because of the central location of the tribe it acts as the meeting place for northern tribes. A large meeting place has been constructed

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in the middle of the main village and the werowance, Vropaack, hosts werowances and diplomats frequently.

- **Mosco**, Werowance of the Wicocomoco: Mosco of the Wicocomoco tribe, located on the southern bank of the Potomac River where it empties into the Chesapeake Bay, is an unusual looking man. He has a hair color unfamiliar to Powhatans, and its likeness was only before seen when whites came to Tsenacommacah. It is rumored that he is the son of one of them to a werowansqua. He certainly looks like he is son of one of the men who came ashore long ago.
- **Keyghanghton**, Werowance of the Chesapeake: The Chesapeake tribe is located in modern day southern Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach, Virginia. Because of how geographically separated the Chesapeake are from the rest of the chiefdom they are largely independent. One of their key responsibilities is diplomatic connections with the Nottoway tribe, one of the traditional rivals of the Powhatans. The werowance Keyghanghton is the only way that the chiefdom can communicate with the Nottoway, and maintains the only connection with the tribe.
- **Taweeren**, Werowance of the Rappahannock: The Rappahannock tribe is located on the Rappahannock River and spans onto both shores. The villages for the tribes are often meeting grounds for diplomatic affairs. This is because of the fact that that it is the main tobacco producing tribe in the chiefdom. Peace ceremonies are events traditionally sealed with tobacco pipes, because of this Rappahannock's villages have become a popular diplomatic destination. Taweeren, Rappahannock's werowance, has profited greatly from his position as the Chieftain of Tobacco.

If you have any questions, concerns, or you just would like some direction for your research feel free to email me here:

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