

6.3 Captain John Smith Describes Virginia Indian Society*

John Smith traveled with Percy on the first voyage to Virginia. Although often out of favor with his fellow colonists, he became one of the most important traders, diplomats, and administrators during the first years at Jamestown. Captured by Powhatan Indians, and later deeply involved in trade with them, Smith gained a thorough, if still imperfect, understanding of their society. The following passage is drawn from Smith's pamphlet, titled A Map of Virginia, written in 1608 and published in 1612.

OF THE NATURALL INHABITANTS OF VIRGINIA

The land is not populous, for the men be fewe; their far greater number is of women and children. Within 60 miles of James Towne there are about some 5000 people, but of able men fit for their warres scarce 1500. To nourish so many together they have yet no means, because they make so smal a benefit of their land, be it never so fertill. 6 or 700 have beene the most [that] hath beene scene together, when they gathered themselves to have surprised Captaine Smyth at Pamunke, having but 15 to withstand the worst of their furie. As small as the proportion of ground that hath yet beene discovered, is in comparison of that yet unknowne. The people differ very much

in stature, especially in language, as before is expressed. Some being very great as the Sesqueshamocks, others very little as the Ighcocomocoos; but generally tall and straight, of a comely proportion, and of a colour browne, when they are of any age, but they are borne white. Their haire is generally black; but few have any beards. The men weare halfe their heads shaven, the other halfe long. For Barbers they use their women, who with 2 shels will grate away the haire, of any fashion they please. The women are cut in many fashions agreeable to their yeares, but ever some part remaineth long. They are very strong, of an able body and full of agilitie, able to endure to lie in the woods under a tree by the fire, in the worst of winter, or in the weedes and grasse, in Ambuscado in the Sommer. They are inconstant in everie thing, but what feare constraineth them to keepe. Craftie, timorous, quicke of apprehension and very ingenuous. Some are of disposition fearefull, some bold, most cautelous, all Savage. Generally covetous of copper, beads, and such like trash. They are soone moved to anger, and so malicious, that they seldome forget an injury: they seldome steale one from another, least their conjurors should reveale it, and so they be persued and punished. That they are thus feared is certaine, but that any can reveale their offences by conjuration I am doubtfull. Their women are carefull not to bee suspected of dishonesty without the leave of their husbands. Each household

*Tyler, *Narratives of Early Virginia*, 98-118.

knoweth their owne lands and gardens, and most live of their owne labours. For their apparell, they are some time covered with the skinnies of wilde beasts, which in winter are dressed with the haire, but in sommer without. The better sort use large mantels of deare skins not much differing in fashion from the Irish mantels. Some imbrodered with white beads, some with copper, other painted after their manner. But the common sort have scarce to cover their nakednesse but with grasse, the leaves of trees, or such like. We have seen some use mantels made of Turkey feathers, so prettily wrought and woven with threeds that nothing could bee discerned but the feathers, that was exceeding warme and very handsome. But the women are alwaies covered about their midles with a skin and very shamefast to be seene bare. They adorne themselves most with copper beads and paintings. **Their women some have their legs, hands, brests and face cunningly imbrodered with diverse workes, as beasts, serpentes, artificially wrought into their flesh with blacke spots.** In each eare commonly they have 3 great holes, whereat they hange chaines, bracelets, or copper. Some of their men weare in those holes, a smal greene and yellow coloured snake, neare halfe a yard in length, which crawling and lapping her selfe about his necke often times familiarly would kiss his lips. Others wear a dead Rat tied by the tail. Some on their heads weare the wing of a bird or some large feather, with a Rattell. Those Rattells are somewhat like the chape of a Rapier but lesse, which they take from the taile of a snake. Many have the whole skinnie of a hawke or some strange fowle, stuffed with the wings abroad. Others a broad peece of copper, and some the hand of their enemy dried. Their heads and shoulders are painted red with the roote *Pocone* braied to powder mixed with oyle; this they hold in somer to preserve them from the heate, and in winter from the cold. Many other formes of paintings they use, but he is the most gallant that is the most monstrous to behold.

Their buildings and habitations are for the most part by the rivers or not farre distant from some fresh spring. Their houses are built like our Arbors of small young springs bowed and tyed;

and, so close covered with mats or the barks of trees very handsomely, that notwithstanding either winde raine or weather, they are as warme as stoooves, but very smoaky, yet at the toppe of the house there is a hole made for the smoke to goe into right over the fire.

Against the fire they lie on little hurdles of Reedes covered with a mat, borne from the ground a foote and more by a hurdle of wood. On these round about the house, they lie heads and points one by thother against the fire some covered with mats, some with skins, and some starke naked lie on the ground, from 6 to 20 in a house. Their houses are in the midst of their fields or gardens; which are smal plots of ground, some 20, some 40, some 100, some 200, some more, some lesse. Some times from 2 to 100 of these houses together, or but a little separated by groves of trees. Neare their habitations is little small wood, or old trees on the ground, by reason of their burning of them for fire. So that a man may gallop a horse amongst these woods any waie, but where the creekes or Rivers shall hinder.

Men women and children have their severall names according to the severall humor of their Parents. Their women (they say) are easilie delivered of childe, yet doe they love children verie dearly. To make them hardy, in the coldest mornings they wash them in the rivers, and by painting and ointments so tanne their skins, that after year or two, no weather will hurt them.

The men bestowe their times in fishing, hunting, wars, and such manlike exercises, seeing to be seene in any woman like exercise, which is the cause that the women be verie painefull and the men often idle. The women and children do the rest of the worke. They make mats, baskets, pots, morters, pound their corne, make their bread, prepare their victualls, plant their corne, gather their corne, beare al kind of burdens, and such like.

Their fire they kindle presently by chafing a dry pointed sticke in a hole of a little square peece of wood, that firing it selfe, will so fire moss, leaves, or anie such like drie thing that will quickly burne. In March and Aprill they live much upon their fishing weares, and feed on fish, Turkeys and

squirrels. In May and June they plant their fieldes, and live most of Acornes, walnuts, and fish. But to mend their diet, some disperse themselves in small companies, and live upon fish, beasts, crabs, oysters, land Torteyes, strawberries, mulberries, and such like. In June, Julie, and August, they feed upon the rootes of *Tocknough*, berries, fish, and greene wheat. It is strange to see how their bodies alter with their diet; even as the deare and wild beasts, they seeme fat and leane, strong and weak. Powhatan their great king and some others that are provident, rost their fish and flesh upon hurdles as before is expressed, and keepe it till scarce times.

For fishing and hunting and warres they use much their bow and arrowes. They bring their bowes to the forme of ours by the scraping of a shell. Their arrowes are made, some of straight young sprigs, which they head with bone some 2 or 3 inches long. These they use to shoot at squirrels on trees. An other sort of arrowes they use, made of reeds. These are peece with wood, headed with splinters of christall or some sharpe stone, the spurres of a Turkey, or the bill of some bird. For his knife, he hath the splinter of a reed to cut his feathers in forme. With this knife also, he will joint a Deare or any beast, shape his shooes, buskins, mantels, &c. To make the noch of his arrow hee hath the tooth of a Bever set in a sticke, wherewith he grateth it by degrees. His arrow head he quickly maketh with a little bone, which he ever weareth at his bracer, of any splint of a stone, or glasse in the forme of a hart, and these they glew to the end of their arrowes. With the sinewes of Deare, and the tops of Deares hornes boiled to a jelly, they make a glew that will not dissolve in cold water.

For their wars also they use Targets that are round and made of the barks of trees, and a sworde of wood at their backs, but oftentimes they use for swords the horne of a Deare put through a peece of wood in forme of a Pickaxe. Some, a long stone sharpened at both ends used in the same manner. This they were wont to use also for hatchets, but now by trucking they have plenty of the same forme, of yron. And those are their chiefe instruments and armes.

Their fishing is much in Boats. These they make of one tree by bowing and scratching away

the coles with stone and shels till they have made it in forme of a Trough. Some of them are an elne deepe, and 40 or 50 foot in length, and some will beare 40 men, but the most ordinary are smaller, and will beare 10, 20, or 30, according to their bignes. Instead of oares, they use paddles and sticks, with which they will row faster then our Barges. Betwixt their hands and thighes, their women use to spin the barks of trees, deare sinewes, or a kind of grasse they call *Pemmenaw*; of these they make a thred very even and readily. This thred serveth for many uses, as about their housing, apparell, as also they make nets for fishing, for the quantity as formally braded as ours. They make also with it lines for angles. Their hookes are either a bone grated, as theynock their arrows, in the forme of a crooked pinne or fishhook or of the splinter of a bone tied to the clift of a litle stick, and with the ende of the line, they tie on the bate. They use also long arrowes tyed in a line wherewith they shoote at fish in the rivers. But they of Accawmack use staves like unto Javelins headed with bone. With these they dart fish swimming in the water. They have also many artificiall weares in which they get abundance of fish.

In their hunting and fishing they take extreame paines; yet it being their ordinary exercise from their infancy, they esteeme it a pleasure and are very proud to be expert therein. And by their continuall ranging, and travel, they know all the advantages and places most frequented with Deare, Beasts, Fish, Foule, Rootes, and Berries. At their huntings they leave their habitations, and reduce themselves into companies, as the Tartar doe, and goe to the most desert places with their families, where they spend their time in hunting and fowling up towards the mountaines, by the heads of their rivers, where there is plentie of game. For betwixt the rivers, the grounds are so narrowe, that little commeth there which they desire not. It is a marvel they can so directly passe these deserts some 3 or 4 daies journey without habitation. Their hunting houses are like unto Arbours covered with mats. These their women beare after them, with Corne, Acornes, Morters and all bag and baggage they use. When they come to the place of exercise, every man doth hi

best to shew his dexteritie, for by their excellling in those qualities, they get their wives. Forty yards will they shoot levell, or very neare the mark, and 120 is their best at Random. At their huntings in the deserts they are commonly 2 or 300 together. Having found the Deare, they environ them with many fires, and betwixt the fires they place themselves. And some take their stands in the midst. The Deare being thus feared by the fires and their voices, they chase them so long within that circle, that many times they kill 6, 8, 10, or 15 at a hunting. They use also to drive them into some narrow point of land, when they find that advantage, and so force them into the river, where with their boats they have Ambuscadoes to kill them. When they have shot a Deare by land, they follow him like blood hounds by the blood and straine, and oftentimes so take them. Hares, Pattridges, Turkeys, or Egges, fat or leane, young or old, they devoure all they can catch in their power. In one of these huntings, they found Captaine Smith in the discoverie of the head of the river of Chickahamania, where they slew his men, and tooke him prisoner in a Bogmire; where he saw those exercises, and gathered these observations.

One Savage hunting alone, useth the skinn of a Deare slit on the one side, and so put on his arme, through the neck, so that his hand comes to the head which is stuffed, and the hornes, head, eies, eares, and every part as arteficially counterfeted as they can devise. Thus shrowding his body in the skinn, by stalking he approacheth the Deare, creeping on the ground from one tree to another. If the Deare chance to find fault, or stande at gaze, hee turneth the head with his hand to his best advantage to seeme like a Deare, also gazing and licking himselfe. So watching his best advantage to approach, having shot him, hee chaseth him by his blood and straine till he get him.

When they intend any warres, the Werowances usually have the advice of their Priests and Conjurors, and their Allies and ancient friends, but chiefly the Priestes determine their resolution. Every Werowance, or some lustie fellow, they appoint Captaine over every nation. They seldome make warre for lands or goods, but for women and children, and principally for revenge. They have

many enimies, namely all their westernely Countries beyond the mountaines, and the heads of the rivers. Upon the head of the Powhatans are the Monacans, whose chiefe habitation is at Rawsawmeake, unto whome the Mouhemenchighes, the Massinnacacks, the Monahassanugges, and other nations, pay tributs. Upon the head of the river of Toppahanock is a people called Mannahocks. To these are contributors the Tauxsritanias, the Shackaconias, the Ourponcas, the Tegoncaes, the Whonkentyaes, the Stegarakes, the Hassinnunges, and diverse others, all confederats with the Monacans, though many different in language, and be very barbarous, living for most part of wild beasts and fruits. Beyond the mountaines from whence is the head of the river Patawomeke, the Savages report, inhabit their most mortall enimies, the Massawomekes upon a great salt water, which by all likelihood is either some part of Commada, some great lake, or some irlet of some sea that falleth into the South sea. These Massawomekes are a great nation and very populous. For the heads of all those rivers, especially the Pattawomekes, the Pauruxumtes, the Sasquesahanocks, the Tockwoughes, are continually tormented by them: of whose crueltie, they generally complained, and very importunate they were with Captaine Smith and his company, to free them from these tormentors. To this purpose, they offered food, conduct, assistance, and continuall subjection. To which he concluded to effect. But the counsell then present, emulating his successe, would not thinke it fit to spare him 40 men to be hazarded in those unknowne regions, having passed (as before was spoken of) but with 12, and so was lost that opportunitee. Seaven boats full of these Massawomekes the discoverers encountred at the head of the Bay; whose Targets, Baskets, Swords, Tobaccopipes, Platters, Bowes and Arrowes, and every thing shewed, they much exceeded them: of our parts: and their dexteritie in their small boats made of the barks of trees sowed with barke, and well luted with gumme, argueth that they are seated upon some great water.

Against all these enimies the Powhatans are constrained sometimes to fight. Their chiefe attempts are by Stratagemes, trecheries, or surprisals. Yet the Werowances, women and children,

they put not to death, but keepe them Captives. They have a method in warre, and for our pleasures, they shewd it us, and it was in this manner performed at Mattapanient.

Having painted and disguised themselves in the fiercest manner they could devise, they divided themselves into two Companies, neare a 100 in a company. The one company called Monacans, the other Powhatans. Either army had their Captaine. These as enimies tooke their stands a musket shot one from another; ranked themselves 15 abreast, and each ranke from another 4 or 5 yards, not in fyle, but in the opening betwixt their fyles, so as the Reare could shoot as conveniently as the Front. Having thus pitched the fields; from either part went a Messenger with these conditions, that whosoever were vanquished, such as escape, upon their submission in 2 daies after, should live, but their wives and children should be prize for the Conquerers. The messengers were no sooner returned, but they approached in their orders. On each flanke a Sarjeant, and in the Reare an office for lieutenant, all duly keeping their orders, yet leaping and singing after their accustomed tune, which they use only in warres. Upon the first flight of arrowes, they gave such horrible shouts and screeches, as though so many infernall helhounds could not have made them more terrible. When they had spent their arrowes, they joined together prettily, charging and retiring, every ranke seconding other. As they got advantage, they caught their enimies by the haire of the head, and downe he came that was taken. His enimie with his wooden sword seemed to beat out his braines, and still they crept to the Reare, to maintaine the skirmish. The Monacans decreasing, the Powhatans charged them in the forme of a halfe moone: they unwilling to be inclosed, fled all in a troope to their Ambuscadoes, on whome they led them very cunningly. The Monacans disperse themselves among the fresh men, whereupon the Powhatans retired with al speed to their seconds; which the Monacans seeing, took that advantage to retire againe to their owne battell, and so each returned to their owne quarter. All their actions, voices and gestures, both in charging and retiring, were so

strained to the hight of their cuillitie and nature, that the strangenes thereof made it seem very delightfull.

For their musicke they use a thicke cane, on which they pipe as on a Recorder. For their warres, they have a great deepe platter of wood. They cover the mouth thereof with a skin, at each corner they tie a walnut, which meeting on the backside neere the bottome, with a small rope they twitch them together till it be so tought and stiffe, that they may beat upon it as upon a drumme. But their chiefe instruments are Rattels made of small gourds or Pumpion shels. Of these they have Base, Tenor, Counter-tenor, Meane and Trille. These mingled with their voices sometimes 20 or 30 together, make such a terrible noise as would rather affright then delight any man. If any great commander arrive at the habitation of a Wicrowance, they spread a mat as the Turkes do a carpet, for him to sit upon. Upon an other right opposite they sit themselves. Then doe all with a tunable voice of showing bid him welcome. After this, doe 2, or more of their chieftest men make an oration, testifying their love. Which they do with such vehemency and so great passions, that they sweate till they drop, and are so out of breath they can scarce speake. So that a man would take them to be exceeding angry or starke mad. Such victuall as they have, they spend freely, and at night where his lodging is appointed, they set a woman fresh painted red with *Pocomes* and oile, to be his bedfellow.

Their manner of trading is for copper, beades, and such like; for which they give such commodities as they have, as skins, fowle, fish, flesh, and their country corne. But their victuall is their chieftest riches.

Every spring they make themselves sicke with drinking the juice of a root they call *wigwasum*, and water, whereof they powre so great a quantity, that it purgeth them in a very violent maner; so that in 3 or 4 daies after, they scarce recover their former health. Sometimes they are troubled with dropsies, swellings, aches, and such like diseases; for cure wherof they build a stove in the form of a dove-house with mats, so close that a few coales therein covered with a pot, will make the patient sweate extremely. For swellings also they use smal peeces

of touchwood, in the forme of cloves, which pricking on the griefe, they burne close to the flesh, and from thence draw the corruption with their mouth. With this root *wighacan* they ordinarily heal greene wounds: but to scarrifie a swelling or make incision, their best instruments are some splinted stone. Old ulcers or putrified hurtles are seldome seene cured amongst them. They have many professed Phisitions, who with their charmes and Rattels, with an infernall rowt of words and actions, will seeme to sucke their inwarde griefe from their navels or their grieved places; but of our Chirurgians they were so conceived, that they beleevd any Plaister would heale any hurt.

OF THEIR RELIGION

There is yet in Virginia no place discovered to bee so Savage in which the Savages have not a religion, Deare, and Bow and Arrowes. All things that were able to do them hurt beyond their prevention, they adore with their kinde of divine worship; as the fire, water, lightning, thunder, our ordinance, peeces, horses, &c. But their chiefe God they worship is the Divell. Him they call *Oke* and serve him more *(of feare than love)*. They say they have conference with him, and fashion themselves as neare to his shape as they can imagine. In their temples, they have his image evill favouredly carved, and then painted and adorned with chaines, copper, and beades, and covered with a skin, in such manner as the deformity may well suit with such a God. By him is commonly the sepulcher of their kings. Their bodies are first howelled, then dreyed upon hurdles till they bee verie dry, and so about the most of their jointes and necke they hang bracelets or chaines of copper, pearle, and such like, as they use to weare: their inwards they stuffe with copper beads and cover with a skin, hatchets, and such trash. Then lappe they them very carefully in white skins, and so rowle them in mats for their winding sheetes. And in the Tombe, which is an arch made of mats, they lay them orderly. What remaineth of this kinde of wealth their kings have, they set at their feet in baskets. These Temples and bodies are kept by their Priests.

For their ordinary burials, they digge a deep hole in the earth with sharpe stakes, and the corp[s]es being lapped in skins and mats with their jewels, they lay them upon sticks in the ground, and so cover them with earth. The buriall ended, the women being painted all their faces with black oyle and oile, doe sit 24 howers in the houses mourning and lamenting by turnes, with such yelling and howling as may expresse their great pavenon.

In every Territory of a *wetowance* is a Temple and a Priest 2 or 3 or more. Their principall Temple or place of superstition is at *Utramunke* at *Pamaunke*, neare unto which is a house Temple or place of *Powhatans*.

Upon the top of certaine redde sandy hills in the woods, there are 3 great houses filled with images of their kings and Divels and Tombes of their Predecessors. Those houses are neare 60 foot in length, built arbor wise, after their building. This place they count so holy as that [none] but the Priestes and kings dare come into them: nor the Savages dare not go up the river in boats by it, but that they solemnly cast some peece of copper, white beads, or Pocones, into the river, for feare their *Oke* should be offended and revenged of them.

In this place commonly is resident 7 Priests. The chiefe differed from the rest in his ornaments: but inferior Priests could hardly be knowne from the common people, but that they had not so many holes in their eares to hang their jewels at. The ornaments of the chiefe Priest was certain attires for his head made thus. They tooke a dosen or 16 or more snake skins, and stuffed them with mosse; and of weesels and other vermine skins, a good many. All these they tie by their tailes, so as all their tailes meete in the toppe of their head, like a great Tassell. Round about this Tassell is as it were a crown of feathers: the skins hang round about his head necke and shoulders, and in a manner cover his face. The faces of all their Priests are painted as ugly as they can devise. In their hands, they had every one his Rattell, some base, some smaller. Their devotion was most in songs which the chiefe Priest beegineth and the rest followed him: sometimes he raketh invocations with broken sentences, by starts and

strange passions, and at every pause, the rest give a short groane.

It could not bee perceived that they keepe any day as more holy then other: but only in some great distresse, of want, feare of enimies, times of triumph and gathering together their fruits, the whole country of men women and children come together to solemnities. The manner of their devotion is sometimes to make a great fire in the house or fields, and all to sing and dance about it, with rattles and shouts together, 4 or 5 houres. Sometimes they set a man in the midst, and about him they dance and sing, he all the while clapping his hands as if he would keepe time. And after their songs and dauncings ended, they goe to their Feasts.

They have also divers conjurations. One they made when Captaine Smith was their prisoner (as they reported) to know if any more of his countrymen would arive there, and what he there intended. The manner of it was thus. First they made a faire fire in a house. About this fire set 7 Priests setting him by them, and about the fire, they made a circle of meale. That done, the chiefe Priest attired as is expressed, began to shake his rattle, and the rest followed him in his song. At the end of the song, he laid downe 5 or 3 graines of wheat, and so continued counting his songs by the graines, till 3 times they incirculed the fire. Then they divide the graines by certaine numbers with little stickes, laying downe at the ende of every song a little sticke. In this manner, they sat 8, 10, or 12 houres without cease, with such strange stretching of their armes, and violent passions and gestures as might well seeme strange to him they so conjured, who but every houre expected his end. Not any meat they did eat till, late in the evening, they had finished this worke: and then they feasted him and themselves with much mirth. But 3 or 4 daies they continued this ceremony.

They have also certaine Altar stones they call *Pawcorances*: but these stand from their Temples, some by their houses, other in the woodes and wildernesses. Upon these, they offer blood, deare suet, and Tobacco. These they doe when they returne from the warres, from hunting, and upon many other occasions. They have also another

superstition that they use in stormes, when the waters are rough in the rivers and sea coasts. Their Conjurors runne to the water sides, or passing in their boats, after many hellish outcries and invocations, they cast Tobacco, Copper, *Pocoes*, and such trash into the water, to pacifie that God whome they thinke to be very angry in those stormes. Before their dinners and suppers, the better sort will take the first bit, and cast it in the fire, which is all the grace they are known to use.

In some part of the Country, they have yearely a sacrifice of children. Such a one was at Quiyoughcobanock, some 10 miles from James Towne, and thus performed. Fifteene of the properest young boyes, betwene 10 and 15 yeares of age, they painted white. Having brought them forth, the people spent the forenoone in dancing and singing about taem with rattles. In the afternoon, they put those children to the roote of a tree. By them, all the men stood in a guard, every one having a Bastinado in his hand, made of reeds bound together. This made a lane betwene them all along, through which there were appointed 5 young men to fetch these children. So every one of the five went through the guard, to fetch a child, each after other by turnes: the guard fearelessly beating them with their Bastinados, and they patiently enduring and receiving all, defending the children with their naked bodies from the unmercifull blowes they pay them soundly, though the children escape. All this while, the women weepe and crie out very passionately, providing mats, skinnies, mosse, and drie wood, as things fittig their childrens funerals. After the children were thus passed the guard, the guard tore down the tree, branches and boughs, with such violence, that they rent the body, and made wreathes for their heads, or bedecked their haire with the leaves. What else was done with the children was not scene; but they were all cast on a heape in a valley, as dead where they made a great feast for al the company. The Werowance being demanded the meaning of this sacrifice, answered that the children were not al dead, but that the *Oke* or Divell did sucke the blood from their left breast, who chanced to be his by lot, till they were dead. But the rest were kept in the wilderness by

the yong men till nine moneths were expired, during which time they must not converse with any: and of these, were made their Priests and Conjurers. This sacrifice they held to bee so necessarie, that if they should omit it, their Oke or Divel and all their other *Quiyoughcosughes* (which are their other Gods) would let them have no Deare, Turkeys, Corne nor fish: and yet besides, hee would make great slaughter amongst them.

They thinke that their Werowances and Priestes, which they also esteeme *Quiyoughcosughes*, when they are dead, doe goe beyound the mountaines towards the setting of the sun, and ever remaine there in forme of their Oke, with their heads painted with oile and *Pocones*, finely trimmed with feathers, and shal have beades, hatchets, copper, and tobacco, doing nothing but dance and sing with all their Predecessors. But the common people, they suppose shall not live after death.

To divert them from this blind idolatrie, many used their best indeavours, chiefly with the Werowances of *Quiyoughcohanock*, whose devotion, apprehension, and good disposition much exceeded any in those Countries: who though we could not as yet prevaile withall to forsake his false Gods, yet this he did beleeve, that our God as much exceeded theirs, as our Gunnes did their Bowes and Arrows, and many times did send to the President, at James towne, men with presents, intreating them to pray to his God for raine, for his Gods would not send him any. And in this lamentable ignorance doe these poore soules sacrifice themselves to the Divell, not knowing their Creator.

OF THE MANNER OF THE VIRGINIANS GOVERNEMENT

Although the cuntry people be very barbarous; yet have they amongst them such governement, as that their Magistrats for good commanding, and their people for due subjection and obeying, excell many places that would be counted very civill.

The forme of their Common wealth is a monarchicall governement. One as Emperour ruleth over many kings or governours. Their chiefe ruler is called Powhatan, and taketh his name of the principall place of dwelling called Powhatan. But his proper name is Wahunsonacock. Some countries

he hath, which have been his ancestors, and come unto him by inheritance, as the cuntry called Powhatan, Arrohatock, Appamatucke, Pamunkey, Youghtarud, and Mattapanient. All the rest of his Territories expressed in the Map, they report have bene his severall conquests. In all his ancient inheritances, hee hath houses built after their mannerlike harbours, some 30, some 40 yardes long, and at every house, provision for his entertainment, according to the time. At Werowcomoco, he was seated upon the North side of the river Pamunkey, some 14 miles from James Towne, where for the most part, hee was resident, but he tooke so little pleasure in our neare neighbourhood, that were able to rise him against his will in 6 or 7 houres, that he retired himself to a place in the deserts at the top of the river Chickahamania betweene Youghtarund and Powhatan. His habitation there is called Orapacks, where he ordinarily now resideth. He is of personage a tall well proportioned man, with a sowe looke, his head somewhat gray, his beard so thicke that it seemeth none at all. His age neare 60; of a very able and hardy body to endure any labour. About his person ordinarily attendeth a guard of 40 or 50 of the tallest men his Country doth afford. Every night upon the 4 quarters of his house are 4 Sentinels, each standing from other a flight shoot: and at every halfe houre, one from the Corps du guard doth hollo, unto whom every Sentinell doth answer round from his stand. If any faile, they presently send forth an officer that beateth him extremely.

A mile from Orapacks in a thicket of wood hee hath a house, in which he keepeth his kind of Treasure, as skinnes, copper, pearle, and beades, which he storeth up against the time of his death and buriall. Here also is his store of red paint for ointment, and bowes and arrowes. This house is 50 or 60 yardes in length, frequented only by Priestes. At the 4 corners of this house stand 4 Images as Sentinels, one of a Dragon, another a Beare, the 3 like a Leopard, and the fourth like a giantlike man: all made evill favorably, according to their best workmanship.

He hath as many women as he will: whereof when hee lieth on his bed, one sitteth at his head, and another at his feet, but when he sitteth, one sitteth on his right hand, and another on his left. As he is wearie of his women, hee bestoweth them

on those that best deserve them at his hands. When he dineth or supbeth, one of his women, before and after meat, bringeth him water in a woolden platter to wash his hands. Another waiteth with a bunch of feathers to wipe them instead of a Towell, and the feathers when he hath wiped are dried againe. His kingdome descendeth not to his sonnes nor children: but first to his brethren, whereof he hath 3. namely Opitchapan, Opechan-canough, and Catataugh, and after their decease to his sisters. First to the eldest sister, then to the rest: and after them to the heires male and female of the eldest sister, but never to the heires of the males.

He nor any of his people understand any letters whereby to write or read, only the lawes whereby he ruleth is custome. Yet when he listeth, his will is a law and must bee obeyed: not only as a king, but as halfe a God they esteeme him. His inferiour kings whom they call werowances are tyed to rule by customes, and have power of life and death as their command in that nature. But this word Werowance which we call and conster for a king, is a common worde whereby they call all commanders: for they have but fewe words in their language and but few occasions to use anie officers more then one commander, which commonly they call werowances. They all knowe their severall landes, and habitations, and limits to fish, fowle, or hunt in, but they hold all of their great Werowances Powhatan, unto whome they pay tribute of skinnies, beades, copper, pearle, deare, turkies, wild beasts, and corne. What he commandeth they dare not disobey in the least thing. It is strange to see with what great feare and adoration all these people doe obay this Powhatan. For at his feet, they present whatsoever he commandeth, and at the least frowne of his browe, their greatest spirits will tremble with feare: and no marvell, for he is very terrible and tyrannous in punishing such as offend him. For example, hee caused certaine malefactors to be bound hand and foot, then having of many fires gathered great store of burning coles, they rake these coles round in the forme of a cockpit, and in the midst they cast the offenders to broyle to death. Sometimes he causeth the heads of them that offend him, to be laid upon the altar or sacrificing stone, and one with clubbes beates out their braines. When he would punish any notorious enimie or malefactor, he causeth him to

be tied to a tree, and, with muscle shels or reeds, the executioner cutteth off his joints one after another, ever casting what they cut off into the fire; then doth he proceed with shels and reeds to case the skinne from his head and face; then doe they rip his belly, and so burne him with the tree and all. Thus themselves reported they executed George Cassen. Their ordinary correction is to beate them with cudgels. Wee have seene a man kneeling on his knees, and at Powhatans command, two men have beat him on the bare skin, till he hath fallen senselesse in a swoound, and yet never cry nor complained.

In the yeare 1608, hee surprised the people of Payankatank, his neare neighbours and subjects. The occasion was to us unknowne, but the manner was thus. First he sent diverse of his men as to lodge amongst them that night, then the Ambuscadoes invironed al their houses, and at the houre appointed, they all fell to the spoile; 24 men they slewe, the long haire of the one side of their heades with the skinne cased off with shels or reeds, they brought away. They surprised also the women and the children and the Werowance. All these they present to Powhatan. The Werowance, women and children became his prisoners, and doe him service. The lockes of haire with their skinnies he hanged on a line unto two trees. And thus he made ostentation as of a great triumph at Werowocomoco, shewing them to the English men that then came unto him, at his appointment: they expecting provision; he, to betray them, supposed to halfe conquer them, by this spectacle of his terrible crueltie.

And this is as much as my memory can call to mind worthie of note; which I have purposely collected, to satisfie my friends of the true worth and qualitie of Virginia. Yet some bad natures will not sticke to slander the Countrey, that will slovenly spit at all things, especially in company where they can find none to contradict them. Who though they were scarce ever 10 miles from James Town, or at the most but at the falles, yet holding it a great disgrace that amongst so much action, their actions were nothing, exclaime of ali things, though they never adventured to knowe any thing; nor ever did any thing but devoure the fruits of other mens labours. Being for most part of such tender educations and small experience in martiall

accidents: because they found not English cities, nor such faire houses, nor at their owne wishes any of their accustomed dainties, with feather beds and downe pillows, Tavernes and alehouses in every breathing place, neither such plenty of gold and silver and dissolute liberty as they expected, had little or no care of any thing, but to pamper their bellies, to fly away with our Pinnaces, or procure their means to returne for England. For the Country was to them a miserie, a ruine, a death, a hell, and their reports here, and their owne actions there according

Some other there were that had yearly stipends to pass to and againe for transportation: who to keepe the mystery of the businesse in themselves, though they had neither tinte nor meanes to knowe much of themselves; yet al mens actions or relations they so formally tuned to the temporizing times simplicitie, as they could make their ignorances seeme much more then al the true actors could by their experience. And those with their great words deluded the world with such strange promises as abused the businesse much worse then the rest. For the businesse being builded upon the foundation of their fained experience, the planters, the mony, tinne [time], and meanes have still miscaried: yet they ever returning, and the Planters so farre absent, who could contradict their excuses? which, still to maintain their vaine glory and estimation, from time to time they have used such diligence as made them passe for truthes, though nothing more false. And that the adventurers might be thus abused, let no man wonder; for the wisest living is soonest abused by him that hath a faire tongue and a dissembling heart.

There were many in Virginia meere projecting verbal and idle contemplatours, and those so devoted to pure idlenesse that though they had lived two or three yeares in Virginia lordly, necessity it selfe could not compell them to passe the Peninsula, or Pallisadoes of James Towne; and those wittie spirits, what would they not affirme in the behalfe of our transporters, to get victuall from their ships, or obtaine their good words in England to get their passes? Thus from the clamors and the ignorance of false informers are sprung those disasters that spring in Virginia, and our ingenious

verbalists were no lesse plague to us in Virginia, then the Locusts to the Egyptians. For the labour of 30 of the best only, preserved in Christianity, by their industrie, the idle livers of neare 200 of the rest: who lived neer 10 months of such naturall meanes, as the Country naturally of it selfe afforded. Notwithstanding all this, and the worsterie of the Savages, the extremitie of sickness, mutinies, faction, ignorances, and want of victuall, in all that time I lost but 7 or 8 men: yet subjected the Savages to our desired obedience, and received contribution from 35 of their kings, to protect and assist them against any that should assault them, in which order they continued true and faithful, and as subjects to his Majestie, so long as I did govern there, untill I left the Country. Since, how they have revolted, the Countrey lost, and againe replanted, and the businesses hath succeeded from time to time, I referre you to the relations of them returned from Virginia, that have bin more diligent in such observations.

Questions

1. What aspects of Indian society seem to interest Smith the most? Why?
2. How does this account compare with popular images of Smith's relationship with Indians?
3. Describe Powhatan society. Do you feel that Smith paints a fair portrait of this people? Do you think that they would agree with his assessment of their culture?
4. Smith claims that "their Chiefe God they worship is the Divell." How does this fit with the rest of his description of Powhatan religion?
5. Smith describes Powhatan government as "monarchical," and Powhatan himself as an "Emperour." Why does he use these terms? How did Powhatan government compare with English government?
6. How does the Indian society described by Smith compare with those encountered by the de Soto expedition? To the Hurons described by Brébeuf?
7. What, in Smith's view, explains the early English difficulties in Virginia?