Spirits in Conflict: Sacred Disruptions and Narratives of Algonquian Spiritual Power in the Puritan Missionary Tracts

A Thesis submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in History

in the Department of History
of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

May 2024

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BA, Valdosta State University, 2015

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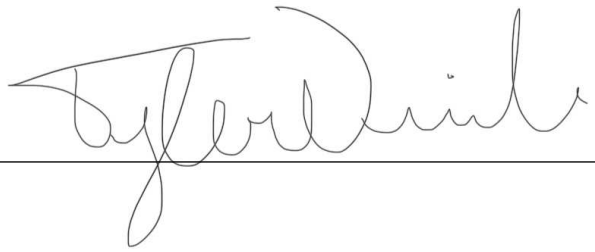
Signature 

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ABSTRACT

English colonization impacted the development of Native American religious practices and beliefs in the Puritan missions of the seventeenth century New England. However, Native American spirituality and worldview also played an important role in how Algonquians interpreted Puritanism and correspondingly engaged with the Christian missionaries. The purpose of this study is to explore the motives and beliefs of Indigenous peoples in the New England missions from their own contextual worldview. Early colonial efforts in the 1620s and 1630s were understood by Algonquian groups in relation to their cosmological perspective. Devastating European diseases, unprecedented warfare, and foreign invaders were perceived as cultural and sacred breakdowns between Native peoples and other-than-human persons pervading their world. Spiritual power permeated the Algonquian landscape in connection to other-than-human beings. Moreover, the English settlers showcased resilient association with otherworldly beings and demonstrated potent forms of spiritual power, which led to Indigenous intrigue and fear of English spirituality. During the first missionizing efforts of the 1640s, Algonquian peoples connected their cultural ideas of the spiritual world with the English religion. Native leaders, such as the Nipmuck sachem Waban, the Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin, and the Penacook sachem Passaconaway, responded to environmental calamities and missionizing efforts in differing ways based on their cosmological understandings of English power in their rapidly changing context.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the faculty and staff I work with at Valdosta State University for their unwavering support. Particularly, I want to thank Dr. Dixie Haggard for his dedication in overseeing this project and his willingness to spend hours with me discussing and examining these ideas. I am also grateful to my family and friends who have supported my efforts in furthering my education and finishing my research. This momentous achievement has only been possible because of you.

DEDICATION

With affection and thankfulness, I dedicate this work to my wife Emilie and our daughter Sophia. This project could never have been completed without your loving support and gracious encouragement.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Puritan missions in colonial New England created a unique spiritual space for intercultural engagement between English settlers and Algonquian peoples in the seventeenth century. With English imperialism in full swing, Puritan ministers actively promoted their cultural shape of Christianity among the Indigenous population and sought to bridge the English-Native worlds through Puritanized spiritual methods. The religious motivations and convictions of the English missionaries are clear within the literary works they published describing their divine purposes and designs from God. Thomas Mayhew Jr., an English Puritan pastor who focused on missionizing Martha's Vineyard, believed that the missional movement was the outworking of God's will and the procedural right of faithful Christian leaders. "In the year of our Lord, 1646, it seemed good to the most high God," says Mayhew, "to stirre up some reverend Ministers […] to consider how they might be serviceable to the Lord Jesus, as well towards the Natives of that Countrey." For Mayhew, theological motivations through the providence of God contributed to the evangelizing provisions among local Algonquians peoples near colonial settlements. If "God might have a select people amongst these Heathens," Mayhew argues then that the missional purpose of the English colonies is self-evident since "he [God] had planted so many Christian Congregations so neer them." English peoples settled in North America for many social, political, and cultural reasons, yet the religious justification to evangelize the non-Christian continues to be one of the primary influences self-evident and self-expressed in religious colonial documents.[1]

[1] John Eliot and Edward Winslow, "The Glorious Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 147. Other influential English ministers encouraged the spiritual and civil assimilation of Native Americans into English society. Also see John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (August 1996), 33-34,

Exploring Puritan perspectives, however, is not the purpose of this research. Historians have academically labored over European viewpoints of North American colonization for decades, and no place has been more thoroughly discussed than the Christian missions among Indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, those Native American affiliates in the Puritan missions have been overlooked in a variety of ways. The intentions of the English pastors are well-reported, but not the purposes of the Native Christians who engaged in the missionizing Atlantic colonial world. This issue arises due to colonial New England sources that were written by English authors who were primarily concerned with their own Anglo-Christian perspectives. Whenever Native perspectives appear in the colonial texts, they are often interpreted through the lens of English pastors who are more concerned with their own socio-political and theological context than they are in accurately understanding Native religion and worldview. Are modern historians unable to interpret Native American intentions, motivations, and perspectives in their engagement with the Puritan missions? As this thesis argues, historians are capable of hearing Native voices in English literature.

By reading *The Eliot Tracts*, a modern published volume of the seventeenth century Puritan writings, edited by Michael Clark, the colonial literature in the 1640s and 1650s unwrap the world of New England missions through the stories of Native Americans endeavoring to comprehend the Christian religion and English ways of life. John Eliot, Thomas Mayhew Jr., Thomas Shepard, and other Puritan pastors collaborated in their efforts to evangelize their Algonquian neighbors and recorded their narratives in hopes of raising financial support from

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https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html; John Cotton, "Gods Promise to His Plantation (1630)," edited by Reiner Smolinski, *Electronic Texts in American Studies* 22 (1998), 19, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/22; The Constitution of the New England Confederation in William Bradford's records notes the aim to "advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ," William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1952), 431.

English supporters, yet these works also bridge the modern reader back into the Indigenous world of these Puritan actors. The missionary texts are attributed to Puritan pastors like John Eliot who wrote the texts but often relied on Native translators who understood the Algonquian dialects more fluently. With Native participants as the primary subjects of the mission literature, the strong reliance on Algonquian translators shows that colonial documents like *The Eliot Tracts* are cross-cultural examples of Indigenous agency and voices. Joshua David Bellin argues this view by surveying how John Eliot's missionary texts are a cultural product deeply transformed by the "power of encounter" through the involvement of Indigenous interpreters and Algonquian translators. Through connecting Native cosmology and cultural paradigms to the narratives of Puritan missionary literature of the seventeenth century, the texts written by Puritan pastors and Native translators become a gateway for understanding Indigenous choices and motives as encounters of Native power.[2]

Within these religious encounters are Native Americans interacting with a new religious worldview and foreign systems of cultural practices, especially for Native leaders who established relationships with eager Puritan missionaries. Waban, a Nipmuck sachem with minor political influence, appears within the earliest records as the first Native to embrace the Christian religion. Eliot and Mayhew's thoughts are easy to evaluate in these texts, but what about Waban? The first question to ask in reading these letters: why did Waban choose to embrace the Christian message? What drove him to enforce Puritan laws and beliefs and to encourage other Natives to adopt Puritan spiritual practices? Cutshamekin, the great sachem of the Massachusett peoples, also interacted with English pastors in the letters but not as eagerly or comprehensively as

[2] Joshua Bellin, "A Little I Shall Say: Translation and Interculturalism in the John Eliot Tracts," in *Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience*, ed. by Colin Calloway and Neal Salisbury (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2003), 55.

Waban and his community. Is it possible to decipher the intentions of these Native leaders to better understanding their perspectives on spirituality, religion, and the English Puritan faith? The purpose of this research is to show how and why these Algonquian leaders exerted their own spiritual agency in *The Eliot Tracts* through connecting their actions and dialogues to an Indigenous perspective.

Historiographical Survey

How historians interpret the participation of Native Americans in colonial New England's Christian missions has drastically changed over the course of a few decades. Although the Puritan tracts impacted the trans-Atlantic English sentiment towards evangelization, Native Christians, and the new English world in the seventeenth century, Eliot's work did not become a focal point of historical scholarship until the mid-1800s and 1900s.[3] These early works shaped the modern imagination of twentieth century historians who continued to view and portray Eliot in a glorious and mythological fashion. In their perspectives, the colonial Puritans planted the sophisticated vision of Anglo-American life within an uncivilized and regressive world, and therefore the religious and social work of Puritan pastors were necessary components for the development of a more sophisticated "savage" society. The Anglo-Puritan world was regarded in a positive way that shaped a national mythology of America's humble beginnings, and negatively shaped the way these historians understood Native Americans within their historical narratives.

Both Alden T. Vaughan and Ola Elizabeth Winslow present an altruistic approach to colonial New England missions through their benevolent perception of John Eliot and the Puritan evangelization methods. These historians display the Puritan pastors, in their advancement to

[3] William Biglow, *History of the Town of Natick* (Boston, 1830); Convers Francis*, Life of John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1836).

reach those without the Christian religion, in ardent goodwill as they engaged the Algonquian peoples of New England from a wholeheartedly soul-winning perspective. Alden T. Vaughan's *New England Frontier: Puritan and Indians, 1620-1675* (1965) views the Puritan missionaries as disconnected from their colonial context of English imperialism and unrelated to the procedures of land expansion over their Native neighbors.[4] The English traders and magistrates are seen as unfortunate agents of Anglo-Native conflict while Puritan ministers propagate spiritual concerns and support for Natives who show interest in the Christian religion. Vaughan's work covers the early history of English colonization and expansion in New England including its missionary activities up to King Philip's War, which emphasizes the role of Puritan missionaries as respectful and caring leaders who do not force religious conversion onto the Indigenous population. Winslow's biography (1968) of Eliot states that his life and missionary work is a "noble story" that defines the origins and framework of American Christianity, the "great spiritual tradition which dignifies our beginnings as a nation."[5] Her view of the Christian missionary conveys a hero for the Native peoples who mitigates the impact of encroaching English settlers who display a poor sense of the Puritan faith. While the local English laity may have been responsible for Anglo-Native conflict, the missionaries themselves were not perceived as causing problems for those Native communities.

One of the major problems in this perspective is the lack of Native American peoples in the mission narratives. Indigenous peoples are circumstantial, pacified participants with little to no voice of their own. The overly-romanticized views of Puritan pastors lead to an overshadowing of the Native affiliates within the missions and the perception of the missions as

[4] Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965).
[5] Ola Winslow, *John Eliot: 'Apostle to the Indians'* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), 3-4.

an English-centric affair. With the growing interest in ethnohistorical narratives and the postcolonial framework, the next generation of historians, the imperialist approach, severely criticized these narratives for their overly simplified perspectives on English colonialism. During the same period, missiologists and church historians also began to interpret the failings of these historians as a reason to revise their approaches to the missions in a new theological and contextual perspective.

In avoiding the methods of the imperialist approach, some scholars in the 1970s and 1980s implemented another perspective of the Puritan religious leaders based not on political or economic assessments but rather on a theological understanding of seventeenth century Puritanism. The modern mythological perception of Eliot had to be replaced with an ideological view that represented his own timeframe and worldview, so these scholars began focusing on the importance of Puritan theology and millenarianism. J. F. Maclear (1975) argues that modern New England studies overlooks the significance of eschatological and apocalyptic perspectives in Puritan voices and how millenarianism impacted the Puritan missions.[6] The English world experienced intense changes politically, socially, and, most importantly, religiously during the early seventeenth century, and the events of both Old and New England led many ministers to seeing their circumstances as the end of the Christian age – literally, the end of the world. Eliot's rationalization of Native Americans as lost descendants of the ancient Jewish tribes played into the worldview of missionization and civilization. "For the minister [John Eliot], the conversion of the natives was not merely an act of benevolence but, more importantly, a duty imposed by God and part of a larger pattern of history," according to Timothy Sehr (1984).[7] For Sehr, the

[6] J. F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 32, No. 2 (Apr., 1975): 223-260.
[7] Timothy J. Sehr, "John Eliot, Millennialist and Missionary," *The Historian* 46, No. 2 (Feb. 1984): 188.

decades of evangelizing Massachusett, Nipmuck, Wampanoag, and other Algonquian peoples by Eliot was not a product of socio-economic policies of English eradication, but a commitment to a theological system that respected Native interests and choices regarding Christianity. In the same framework, Richard Cogley's *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (1999) surveys the historical development of Puritan missions from the missiological drive of the English pastors in the 1630s up to the outbreak of the 1675 pan-Native war in New England. As a comprehensive history of the Massachusetts Bay missions, Cogley presents Eliot as the product of his Puritan age with an emphasis on both the religious conversion and the socio-political civilization of the Native adherents. This process of reshaping Native cultural identity towards an Anglo-Christian perspective reflects Eliot's sympathy towards Indigenous converts and sincerity towards Puritan ideals, particular in his emphasis of non-forced conversions.[8]

The theologically-contextualized approach to New England's missions is an important step for understanding the motives and thought-processes of Puritan ministers in their conversion attempts, yet still falls short in providing answers to the similar questions of motives and worldview for Native Christians. The more recent work *John Eliot's Puritan Ministry to New England "Indians"* by Do Hoon Kim (2021) articulates the theologically-contextualized view of Eliot's ministry by arguing that the idea of Puritan "missions" ought to be abandoned for a more ecclesiological-oriented understanding of the Native praying towns. In presenting a clear argument for the Puritan perspective of church organization in the praying towns, Kim, while discussing dialogues by Native converts, fails to represent Native voices from an Indigenous perspective that do not revert to overly-simplified portrayals. As a point of critique, Kim uses

[8] Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Harvard University Press, 1999).

Eliot's *Indian Dialogues* to express the sincerity and genuine faith of Eliot's Native converts.[9] The principle of providing Native voice and examples of Indigenous activity is commendable, but the problem lies within the source material Kim utilizes to portray those voices. Henry Bowden and James Ronda state that Eliot's *Indian Dialogues* are a fictional writing of "imagined encounters" between Christian Natives and other non-Christian Natives, which is in line with Eliot's own statement that the narratives are "partly historical."[10] Eliot's interactions with Native Christians gave him the knowledge to produce a literary work based on historical experiences, but the dialogues themselves were not based on real, genuine encounters. The altruistic approach, in both its older and newly revised form, tends to either outright ignore Native agency within the missionary tracts or fails to account for Native confessions and narratives that are more than passive justifiers of Puritan successes.

The Anglo-centered approach by the altruistic historians came under severe scrutiny in the 1970s and 1980s from historians who viewed Eliot and the Puritan missions as an extension of English imperialism with the purpose of religiously subjugating the Native population. Francis Jennings' pivotal work *The Invasion of America* (1975) views the missionary movements by Puritan pastors in the seventeenth century as over-exaggerated fabrications of religious propaganda meant to divert attention from the political and theological failings of the New England colonies.[11] Being highly critical of the perspective of Vaughan, Jennings sought to undo the pro-Puritan perspective of New England historians that viewed ministers as separately motivated from the political and economic agents of their own time. His view perceives Puritan

[9] Do Hoon Kim, *John Eliot's Puritan Ministry to New England 'Indians'* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2021), 159-189.
[10] John Eliot, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction*, edited by Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 41 and 61.
[11] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and The Cant of Conquest* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 228-253.

pastors, although acting as religious mediators of the Crown and responding to political changes occurring on both sides of the Atlantic, as spiritual agents of the land-hungry empire. Jennings surmises his views on the missions in clear terms: "Eliot's mission was conceived as a means to an end rather than an end in itself."[12] The missions, in this imperialist approach, were a colonial attempt to satisfy the English Parliament and its high-level accusations. The Massachusett Bay colony, who failed to establish any missionizing efforts in the 1630s, were under great suspicions by Parliament for claims of fomenting political disarray and allowing theological heresies to persist.[13] Eliot's ministry among the local Algonquian communities in 1646, moreover, gave colonial magistrates a means to brushoff Parliament's over-gazing eye into their colonial affairs, and crafted a stronger narrative for colonial activity within the North American world. Within this perspective, the Puritan writings – particularly the missionary letters by John Eliot – are simply religious propaganda. Jennings highly criticizes Puritan motives and intentions in the missions and views their records as falsified documents with low levels of accurate historical detail.

This revisionary school placed a high importance on emphasizing the socio-economic relationship between Native Americans and the English missionaries. While many of the revisionary historians highlighted the connection between political dynamics and English ministers, new lines were drawn in underlining Native Americans within the Puritan missions and showing their side of the story. The ethnohistorical views of this approach often placed Native peoples as victims of English encroachment and imperial domination. Alfred Crosby (1976) argues that virgin soil epidemics were like "lighting matches into tinder" by which

[12] Francis Jennings, "Goals and Functions of Puritan Missions to the Indians," *Ethnohistory* 18, No. 3 (Summer, 1971): 207.
[13] *Ibid*., 203-204.

disease spread uncontrollably fast through "virgin" Indigenous communities and devastating a large portion of the population.[14] Neal Salisbury in his book *Manitou and Providence* (1982) contends that the "conquest" of New England unfolded in waves of colonial breaches leading directly to Native breakdowns: colonization, disease, trade and diplomacy, war, and, lastly, land acquisition.[15] These waves of conquest shattered Native America and made way for the ever-growing population of English settlers who were seeking to migrate for new religious, economic, and social opportunities. The idea of virgin soil epidemics bolstered Salisbury's argument in suggesting that Native Americans in the colonial period were biologically deficient and inherently unable to prevent the high death tolls caused by European diseases. Followed by the spread of more English settlements and regional warfare, such as the Pequot War in 1636-38, Native groups on the borders of the colonies absorbed the full force of the empire's pressures. Salisbury concludes that Eliot's proselytizing ministry is a product of the larger English imperialism that Massachusett and Nipmuck Natives converts unwittingly acquiesced under.[16] Henry Bowden and James Ronda (1980) note that the support of the Native community by spiritual leaders failed due to waves of English domination and disruptions:

> Community support depended on results, and when Puritan influence began assaulting various aspects of native life, that support wavered. Especially when missionaries directly challenged local spiritual leaders, there were few institutional lines of religious authority to sustain those who wished to resist white culture and rely on the traditional role of powwows.[17]

The dismantling of the social, political, and cultural world of Algonquian peoples presented Natives with very few options in the face of English imperialism. With the English settlers on

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[14] Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33. No. 2 (April 1976): 290.
[15] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 8-10.
[16] Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31, No. 1 (Jan. 1974): 28-29.
[17] Eliot, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues*, 15.

one side and Native enemies on the other, some Indigenous groups began submitting to the English government, joining the Puritan missions, and adopting their Christian religion.

The Christian missions, known as "praying towns" in the missionary literature, perpetuated the imperialist agendas of New England's leaders by subjugating Indigenous groups through religious proselytization, cultural conformity, and the enforcement of English laws. Kenneth M. Morrison argues in "The Art of Coyning Christians" (1974) that Puritan ministers were deluding themselves in believing Natives truly assimilated and became "civilized" through the process of the praying towns. From his perspective, the missionary tracts produce false narratives that reflect Puritan expectations and hopes but not Native "converts" who truly understood or fully adopted their Christian ideas and beliefs.[18] Survival, in this view, is the key motive for Native American engagement within the missions. Neither the English nor the Natives perceived religious continuity and commonality as the goal, but solely cooperated for their own beneficial ends. The other reaction by Native Americans in the imperialistic view, instead of assimilating into the Christian English framework, was to fully resist the colonial encroachment. James Ronda (1977) argues that Natives perceived English missionaries as a "disturbing impact" on their Indigenous cultures and ultimately responded with strong cultural resistance in acts of deterring colonial powers.[19] This stream of scholarship crafted the assimilation-resistance model of Indigenous activity in explaining how Native peoples passively responded to Puritan evangelization because they were too weak to resist the overwhelming tide of colonization. Colonists established themselves firmly on the coastal regions of southern New England through diplomatic, militaristic, and economic means that ultimately led to detrimental

[18] Kenneth Morrison, "'The Art of Coyning Christians:' John Eliot and the Praying Indians of Massachusett," *Ethnohistory* 21, No. 1 (Winter, 1974): 77-92.
[19] James Ronda, "'We Are Well As We Are:' An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34, No. 1 (Jan., 1977): 82.

ends for its Algonquian residents. Native peoples, in their desperate pursuit of survival, either chose to assimilate into the unconquerable machine of the English empire, or to risk their chances settling westward among their looming enemies and unknown landscapes.

The revisionary historians of the imperialist approach made both positive grounds in furthering the complex narratives of New England history and, at the same time, negative ground in continuing oversimplified errors in examining Puritan and Native agency. First, the altruistic approach made too sharp of a distinction between the Puritan minister's world and the socio-economic English systems, and revisionists like Jennings correctly placed John Eliot back into that imperial English framework. The political realm of the English empire had an impact on the beginning of Eliot's ministry among local Algonquians. Warfare took a devastating toll on the Native political systems that existed prior to colonization, and epidemics forced Indigenous peoples to relocate, restructure, and readjust to the European newcomers. Understanding the impact of English colonialism helps build the conditions and background of the Native Christian communities that developed in the 1640s and why John Eliot was successful in some areas and not in others.

Secondly, the imperialist approach makes two mistakes: it oversimplifies Puritan reasoning and motivations while also dichotomizing Native agency. The theologically-oriented approach by J.F. Maclear and Richard Cogley criticize Jennings and others for their insistence on not recognizing Puritan theological motivations for Native proselytizing on eschatological grounds (e.g. the millenarian conviction that Native Americans were Jews). The imperialist approach did little to emphasis English cultural and religious convictions by the ministers that might not have been shared by political elites, traders, or the self-serving laity. Moreover, Jennings, Salisbury, Morrison, and Ronda create a narrative of assimilation or resistance as reflecting the only options Natives had in response to English imperialism. With survival as the

only metric of consideration for Native actions, these two options forced historians into one-dimensional stories of Indigenous narratives.

The flattening of Native reactions became a point of critique and remodeling among later historians. While not abandoning the imperialist perspective fully, some scholars started to consider English colonialism and its impact on Native society in ways that included other Indigenous motivations. Particularly in how Native American converts continued to practice their traditional perspectives while also shifting to an Anglo-Christian environment. Elise Brenner (1980) criticizes Jenning's work for not allowing Indigenous self-determination in the praying towns by ignoring both material and social continuation of Native cultural and material lifestyles.[20] The adoption of English goods in the missions restored stability to groups on the verge of collapse, but it also allowed Natives to use new means to continue traditional forms of leadership and communal practices. Brenner suggests that true Native conversions occurred minimally as a type of outward engagement to satisfy English onlookers, but practically the praying towns gave "the ability of Indians to control their lives."[21] As survival continued to be the key motive for Indigenous actions, Brenner attempts to qualify the narrative of Puritan missions not only as centers of assimilation from an English perspective but as a new start for Native groups to continue living in their traditional, agrarian ways of life. James Axtell (1988) argues that the success of the praying towns from an Indigenous perspective can be interpreted in their ability to preserve Native ethnic identity and culture.[22] The waves of English colonialism presented New England Algonquians with the reality of losing their homelands and, in connection with their physical environment, their cultural identity. Axtell says that the Puritan

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[20] Elise M. Brenner, "To Pray or to Be Prey: That Is the Questions Strategies for Cultural Autonomy of Massachusetts Praying Town Indians," *Ethnohistory* 27, No. 2 (Spring, 1980): 135-152.
[21] *Ibid*., 149.
[22] James Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 47-57.

missions, while tragic in one sense, gave Native peoples an effective means of continuing in their homelands when faced with "accommodation or annihilation."[23] Robert J. Naeher (1989) emphasizes this idea of accommodation by arguing how the experiential and emotional nature of Puritanism helped Native peoples adapt to English imperialism. By exploring the Native confessions, Naeher notes how the Puritan concepts of sin, suffering, and grace resonated with new converts struggling with a dramatically changing world, which gave opportunity to all Natives, not just spiritual elites, in participating in spiritual communion with God.[24] While Brenner, Axtell, and Naeher improve the oversimplified narratives of Native reactions, their approaches only views economic and cultural survival as the primary motivation for Indigenous actions. Undoubtedly, survival did play a major part in the decision-making process that Native leaders and their communities had to resolve in association with colonial expansion, but many of these narratives are limiting due to the lack of emphasis on Indigenous cultural worldviews and social frameworks beyond material objects. Axtell's approach does break away from the assimilation-resistance model in adopting an accommodationist view against the assimilationist approach.

In the 1990s and 2000s, historical narratives of the praying towns began shifting their tone on the acquiescent nature of Indigenous communities towards an accommodation view based on Native frameworks and motivations. Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen (1990) evaluates how, in contrast to Axtell's forced conversions perspective, Natives in the praying towns adapted new English technologies and ideas in relation to their cultural outlook and did not fully abandon their traditional perspectives within the missions. Throughout the seventeenth century, the

[23] Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," 53.
[24] Robert J. Naeher, "Dialogue in the Wilderness: John Eliot and the Indian Exploration of Puritanism as a Source of Meaning, Comfort, and Ethnic Survival," *New England Quarterly* 62, No. 3 (Sept., 1989): 346-368.

praying Natives eventually acclimate towards Anglo-Christian perspectives, but this occurs slowly over multiple generations rather than in the first decade of evangelization.[25] Scholars continued presenting histories of Native America from the standpoint of the Indigenous peoples and their cultural worldview. Daniel Richter persuasively states this view in his book *Facing East from Indian Country* (2001): "Read carefully, each in its very different way reveals Indian people trying to adapt traditional ideas of human relationship based on reciprocity and mutual respect to a situation in which Europeans were becoming a dominant force in eastern North America." Richter suggests that the power of Eliot's Native conversion stories do not come from his scribal control of the narratives but through the Native speakers and story-tellers who procured their own spiritual paths in the colonial world.[26] Craig White (2003) criticizes the previous models of resistance and acculturation in their restrictive expression of Indigenous identity and activity. In viewing the missionary tracts as "oral traditions," White breaks away from the inept English views of Native American conversion narratives and builds on "native antecedents" that emphasize how "the Massachusett reconciled new powers with old ones."[27] Michael Oberg (2003) also breaks with the Western mold by retelling the life of the Mohegan Uncas and the complexity of Native leaders living by the memory of Anglo-Americans:

> The early chroniclers of Uncas's career, pouring him into a mold formed by their own preconceptions of American colonial history, Indian character, and the ultimate fate of America's native peoples, cast his story in static and one-dimensional terms. Uncas was worthy of friendship, or too treacherous to be relied upon. He was a selfless friend, or a driven manipulator.[28]

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[25] Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646-1730," *New England Quarterly* 63, No. 3 (Sep., 1990): 396-428.
[26] Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 110-111.
[27] Craig White, "The Praying Indians' Speeches as Texts of Massachusett Oral Culture," *Early American Literature* 38, No. 3 (2003): 448. Also see Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).
[28] Michael Leroy Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 12.

Oberg highlights the problem modern historians face in rethinking the methodology used to evaluate narratives of Early America and Native America narratives. Too often Indigenous narratives are told from a one-sided, non-Native perspective. Uncas, who struggled to balance Native power within the colonial politics, acted in his own self-interest and for the concerns of his community, which has perplexed historians who lack the anthropological and historical Native framework. David Silverman (2005) argues that the Wampanoag Christians on Martha's Vineyard did not forsake their traditional religious ideology and perspective, but rather selectively incorporated aspects of Christianity within their Indigenous framework. The Wampanoag Christians connected the English God and the religious role of Puritan ministers to the same Native categories of *manitous* and powwows.[29] Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas (2010) likewise explore the stories of Native affiliates who incorporated Christianity into their cultural paradigm while their local Indigenous customs and beliefs persisted.[30] Algonquians interacted with the Puritan faith similarly to their own spiritual traditions and practices while simultaneously transforming their own religious identity in the new Christian context. The Puritan pastors, of course, insisted on the purity – the consistency of the English form – in the Christian confessions made by praying town Natives and their doctrinal orthodoxy and piety. This did not mean, however, that Puritan ideas translated into Algonquian worldview as clearly or neatly as the ministers desired. Consequentially, many Indigenous socio-political systems and practices were filled with spiritually-oriented meaning that the English observers simply misunderstood. R. Todd Romero (2011) notes that "Native Americans were more open to incorporating or refashioning aspects of Christianity than their English neighbors were to

[29] David J. Silverman, "Indians, Missionaries, and Religious Translation: Creating Wampanoag Christianity in Seventeenth-Century Martha's Vineyard," *William & Mary Quarterly* 62, No. 2 (Apr. 2005): 141-174.
[30] Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds., *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

experimenting with Indian religious practices in the region."[31] As the success of the Puritans grew, Native Americans made concessions with adopting Christianity in ways corresponding to their cultural paradigm and lifestyles. Linford D. Fisher (2012) explores how New England Natives in the eighteenth century responded to English religion in a plethora of fashions, with all reflecting Indigenous forms of beliefs, practices, and ideologies on spirituality.[32] The beginning of the Puritan missions did not necessarily mean the end of Indigenous practices and beliefs, as New England Algonquians often interpreted Christians practices and beliefs through their own worldview.

Additionally, scholars of Native American history outside of colonial New England in recent decades insist on the importance of fashioning narratives that reflect the innovative agency and customary political methods of Native peoples. Expressing Indigenous views of power reinforces the necessity of incorporating Native voices within histories of Early America, which requires historiographical revision. Joel Martin (1997) pushes for a philosophical shift in the historical paradigm of Native American and history of religion by arguing for narratives that deal with "the themes of contact and colonialism." The task of reinterpreting Indigenous peoples in the early colonial American context through a postcolonial approach is a necessary endeavor for historians who desire to understand colonial religious life and the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred.[33] Greg O'Brien (2002) investigates the changing dynamic between Choctaw power and the development of English America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By focusing on Native elites, he argues that spiritual power for the Choctaws was not an abstract

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[31] R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 8.
[32] Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2012).
[33] Joel W. Martin, "Indians, Contact, and Colonialism in the Deep South Themes for a Postcolonial History of American Religion," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, edited by Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 149-180.

concept but rather physical objects that were associated with the sacred world in different spheres of life: weapons and war, wealth and trade, and gifts and social relationships. Choctaw power was directly linked to their Indigenous cosmology and a Native individual's ability to access it.[34]

Dixie Ray Haggard (2006) argues that the Yamasee War of 1715 was the result of a largescale breakdown of Indigenous spiritual power in the Southeast, with warfare against the Carolinian settlers as a means of restoring communal social and religious stability. As smallpox, the slave trade, and warfare slowly decimated Native communities, the loss of family and clan members equated to the loss of spiritual power. Grounded on ancient alliances, Southeastern Native peoples revolted against the Carolinian traders and settlers in hopes of regaining lost power.[35] Paul Kelton (2015) highlights how Cherokees responded to colonial epidemics from their cosmological worldview by performing medicinal and spiritual ceremonies. Spiritual objects and powerful other-than-human beings were ritually invocated to prevent, heal, and remove smallpox by Cherokee healers. Whenever illnesses refused to dissipate from the community, a malevolent spiritual practitioner, like a wizard or witch, was assumed to be the cause.[36] Recognizing how Indigenous people in North America continued engaging their world and the European settlers from their own perspective highlights how and why they acted to devastation and dramatic change.

The Thesis

As the historiographical survey shows, the transition from an English-centered approach to an Indigenous-centered approach of Early America history and the Puritan missions shifts the

[34] Greg O'Brien, *Choctaws in a Revolutionary Age, 1750-1830* (University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
[35] Dixie Ray Haggard, "The Native Spiritual Economy and the Yamasee War," *History Compass* 4/6 (2006): 1117-1132.
[36] Paul Kelton, *Cherokee Medicine, Colonial Germs: An Indigenous Nation's Fight against Smallpox, 1518-1824* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 91-101.

focus of the narratives of seventeenth century Natives. By focusing on English imperialism, Puritan theology, and the Christian ministers, the history of Puritan missions stays primarily in an English world. At the center of these missions, though, were the Native Americans who contributed to the political and civil construction of new social communities, religious observances and beliefs, spiritual dialogues, and conversion narratives written down by Puritan leaders. The adherence to the assimilation-resistance model furthered an English-centered account that positioned Native peoples as dependent and pacified agents to colonial English activity. With well-needed criticisms against that model, more recent scholarship utilizes an accommodation-resistance model to explain the dynamic and diverse actions of Algonquians in the colonial missions.

In my research, I discovered that aspects of the accommodation-resistance approach lack the theoretical framework to answer my basic questions about Native leaders and their actions recorded in the missionary tracts. The Nipmuck sachem Waban fits within the *accommodationist* position of the model reasonably, but what about the Penacook sachem Passaconaway and Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin? Both of their actions in the Puritan missionary tracts express a general willingness to deal peacefully with the English settlers alongside of their differing levels of antagonism and disinterest towards the Puritan ministers, so neither individual fully embraced Puritanism like Waban. The resistance side of the model is too simplistic for the actions of both Cutshamekin and Passaconaway in not adequately representing their engagements with the missionaries from an Indigenous point of view. Therefore, to better tell their stories in the missionary tracts, I am advocating for a corrected model that orients the spiritual motives and powerful actions of Native agents around an Indigenous-centered domain and worldview – the accommodation-preservation model (as seen in Figure 1 below).

The resistance position focuses on Native actions in response to English imperialism, which historically codifies the English world as the primary interpretive focus, while the *preservationist* position orients Native agency based on the Algonquian community and worldview. Both the accommodationist and preservationist positions navigate Indigenous narratives in relation to their Native world as the center of the New England story. The English colonies, while important and necessary for telling the history of the seventeenth century, were entering a Native American world. Indigenous spiritual worlds that existed prior to European

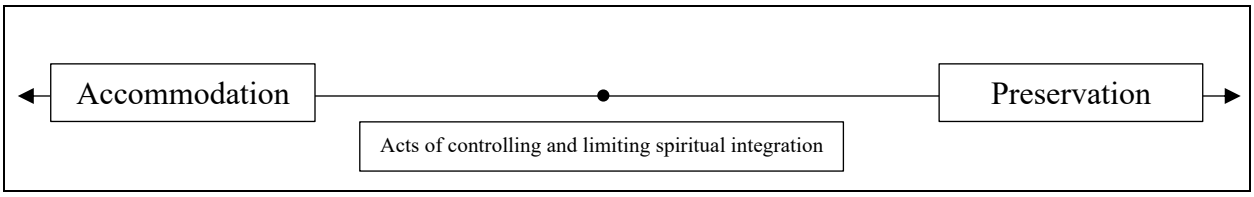

Figure 1: Accommodation-Preservation Model

exploration and colonization that deeply connected the Native peoples with their landscapes and to each other. When the English arrived, the world of Algonquians dramatically changed. New diseases destroyed local communities and brought about a collapse and breakdown of social, sacred, political institutions. Native religious leaders struggled to control the spreading sicknesses that relentlessly overwhelmed both the young and old in the community. Disease, warfare, and environmental disasters were a product of, as I argue in this project, *sacred disruptions* – the breakdown between human beings and other-than-human beings in the world – that Natives experienced continually through the early decades of colonial settlement and laid the groundwork for interpreting English Christianity as a potent spiritual source of power. [37]

The Puritan worldview inherently viewed Christianity as the only absolute, authoritative, and true religion in the world. Moreover, English Puritans interpreted other religious systems as

[37] The term "sacred disruptions" is original to the author of this research. Social fragmentation and political collapse caused by violence and death, from the Algonquian perspective, resulted from cosmological imbalances and ceremonial disharmony with spiritual entities in the human and sacred worlds.

inferior, heterodox, and evidence of Satan's regime activity against their exclusive vision of God's kingdom. This portrait of exceptionality was not unique just among Europeans – as the English, Dutch, French, and Spanish all viewed themselves as superior to one another – but also evident within the worldview of Native American peoples. Algonquians interacting with Puritan peoples often noted the authenticity of Christian power yet in ways that corresponded to their understanding of the world. By incorporating English beliefs, objects, and practices into their own views of the world,[38] New England Natives saw Christianity as another source of sacred power that can be accessed by individuals of spiritual skill and connection. As Natives continued to interpret Puritan Christianity as another way of accessing the spiritual world, the English religion began to take shape in the Native paradigm through methods of *spiritual integration*: the act of Native people interpreting Christian religion within their own spiritual framework and incorporating the Puritan's God and Devil into their Indigenous cosmology.[39] The English God for Algonquians became another *manitou*, a supernatural entity that human beings could associate and draw power from.

As this thesis argues, the accommodation-preservation model presents the best framework for understanding the motivations, stories, and actions of colonial Native leaders like Waban, Cutshamekin, and Passaconaway in the Puritan missionary tracts. Their Indigenous world in the 1640s and 1650s was the product of a series of sacred disruptions that intensely impacted their communities in similarly chaotic ways while also challenging their leadership authority. As Puritan Christianity was culturally and ideologically interpreted to be the cause of sacred disruptions, some sachems chose to view the new spiritual power as the solution to

[38] Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England 1650-1775* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 40-48

[39] The term "spiritual integration" is original to the author of this research.

otherworldly imbalances and socio-political disorder while others acted to preserve their own sacred sources and communal stability by limiting English influence. Indigenous leaders either accommodated English Puritanism to establish sacred stability or preserved their Indigenous spirituality, while limiting Christian influence, to retain political power, social prestige, and communal strength. Their methods of spiritual integration reveal how Algonquian leaders actively pursued differing paths in the pursuit of protecting their communities, their sachemship, and their connections to the sacred world.

Organization and Terminology

The organization of this project starts with the general thesis of an accommodation-preservation approach, sacred disruptions, and spiritual integration. Following this first chapter, the second chapter explores the early contact period of English colonialism and how Algonquians interpreted disease, warfare, and Puritan missions as related pattens of sacred disruptions caused by disharmony with the sacred world and other-than-human beings. In the third chapter, the Nipmuck sachem Waban accommodates English Puritanism in accessing spiritual power in the form of healing from disease, connecting with English *manitou*, and bolstering his sachemship through the growing tributary system of the Native missions. The Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin, in the fourth chapter, willingly befriends the English settlers and allies with them against his Pequot enemies but seeks to preserve his spiritual authority against the Puritan pastors and challenges their religion. Due to leaders like Waban subverting his control of the tributary system, Cutshamekin loses prestige in his attempt to promote Indigenous connections to cosmological balance and power. The fifth chapter analyzes the reaction of the Penacook sachem Passaconaway to the sacred disruptions caused by English settlers and his candid opposition to Eliot's religious message and beliefs.

Following in the steps of Christoph Strobel, I will be using the term *Dawnland* as a place-name for New England to emphasize the Indigenous worlds and systems existing prior to Europeans and present throughout the seventeenth century.[40] I use the terms *Native, Native American,* and *Indigenous* interchangeably to describe the original peoples of North America. In the same way that English and European are capitalized, terms referring to the peoples of North America are capitalized to emphasis their sovereignty and identity as a distinct community and nation. Rather than using the term "convert" to describe praying town Natives interacting with Christian Puritanism, I am adopting Linford Fisher's idea of "affiliate" to emphasize Indigenous approaches to religious practices and lifestyles that often differed from English understandings.[41] Although many of the sources I utilize in this work refer to Indigenous peoples as "Indian," I avoid using this term for the sake of clarity and historical accuracy. When possible, I use terms that broadly describe similar culture groups, such as *Algonquian*, and specific peoples, such as *Nipmuck*, *Massachusett*, and *Penacook.*

I use the term *colonist* and *settler* interchangeably in describing individuals and communities of European descent who participated in the migration and colonization of North America. While avoiding the term *white* for people of European descent, since the cultural term and identity had not fully developed in the period analyzed in this work, I will use the term *Anglo* to also refer to English peoples and their culture and religious customs. I use *Puritan* in reference to English pastors of the missions and not Native affiliates. I am aware of the larger discussion regarding the lack of cohesion in seventeenth century English religion and the

[40] Christoph Strobel, *Native Americans of New England* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2020).
[41] Fisher argues for the malleability of Indigenous perspectives within English Christian institutions: "Conversion often implies a unidirectional, total, complete, and usually permanent transformation from one religious 'state' of being to another, whereas affiliation is one element of religious engagement and reflects an elasticity in religious association as lived, which was often provisional and changeable." Although his argument correlates to Natives within the eighteenth-century context, I think it is an appropriate and accurate description of the 1640s and 1650s context of the Puritan missions, see Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*, 84-106.

evidence of theological diversity in Puritanism, which leads scholars to embrace the idea of Puritanisms. Yet since my work primarily focuses on the Indigenous peoples who engaged the ministers in the missionary tracts, I will maintain the use of *Puritan* and *Puritanism* as a singular English front to make a contrasting narrative between the pastors and the actions, beliefs, and customs of their Indigenous laity.

Chapter II

DAWNLAND

It was the year 1647, and the harsh winter months were slowly passing. A few Puritan ministers began traveling in March to Nonantum to resume their lectures about the Christian religion. The Nipmuck peoples, interested in the teaching of these Christian pastors, engaged in religious dialogue by asking new questions and the sharing of their own personal experiences. In the *Clean Sun-Shine of the Gospel* tract, the last story recorded in a letter by John Eliot talks about a Native man's dream: the arrival of a black dressed man and his message of God's anger towards the Indigenous people of Dawnland. "That about two yeers before the English came over into those parts," according to Eliot's account of the Native dream, "there was a great mortality among the Indians, and one night he could not sleep above half the night, after which hee fell into a dream." In the dream, the Native man saw a "great many men come to those parts in cloths, just as the English now are apparelled" and from this group of people came a "man all in black, with a thing in his hand which hee now sees was all one English mans book." The obscure man said that he stood in a "higher place then all the rest" and spoke as a messenger of God telling "all the Indians that God was moosquantum or angry with them, and that he would kill them for their sinnes." Startled, the Native narrator said he feared for his family's lives and asked, "what God would do with him and his Squaw and Pappooses but the black man would not answer him a first time." After he asked the same question three times, the man in black cloth with the English book "smil'd upon him, and told him that he and his Papooses should be safe."[42]

[42] Thomas Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel Breaking Forth Upon the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 119.

The Puritan ministers were unsure of the validity of this Native man's dream. "I attribute little to dreams," says Eliot, "yet God may speak to such by them rather then to those who have a more sure Word to direct and warn them."[43] The interpretations of this dream are unclear. From the English perspective, man dressed in black certainly represented the Puritan preachers who proclaimed the same message of God's judgement towards the sinful lifestyles and beliefs of the Indigenous peoples, but is this how the Native dreamer interpreted the same details? To what was the Native narrator referring by the "great mortality among the Indian?" Moreover, in Puritan records the Algonquian term *manitou*, which generally referred to other-than-human beings and rare forms of spiritual power, was translated as God in the English tracts.[44] Did the storyteller therefore assume that the English God, or *manitou*, was the cause of the "great mortality" and the death of people from within these present Massachusett and Nipmuck communities? How did Indigenous cosmology connect disease to the spiritual and natural world?

This chapter will discuss the beginning of sacred disruptions in southern Dawnland that took place during the early seventeenth century due to English colonization and the expansion of Puritan missions. The arrival of English settlers led to disease outbreaks and increased warfare that perpetuated periods of dramatic instability for Massachusett, Wampanoag, Nipmuck, Narragansett, and Pequot peoples. Recent historiography has often told the story of epidemics during English colonization as the result of immune-deficient North American peoples, but I will emphasize the importance of environmental factors in creating unstable circumstances for deadlier disease impact. The cultural connections between contagions and other environmental factors are key to understanding Indigenous perceptions of disease in correlation to their spiritual

[43] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 119.
[44] Clinton N. Westman and Tara L. Joly, "Visions of the great mystery: Grounding the Algonquian *manitow* concept," *Social Compass* 64, No. 3 (2017): 362-363.

and cosmological worldview. When fast-spreading disease and other environmental disasters took place, Indigenous peoples often interpreted these events as great sacred imbalances in the world and sought after traditional sources of spiritual power to regain reciprocity with other-than-human beings causing these occurrences. Sacred disruptions, like the "great mortality" referenced in Eliot's story, reflect how Native peoples spiritually integrated Christianity into their cosmological systems and understood the Puritan God in connection to their own sacred beliefs and understanding of the world.

The Multi-Causal Model of European Diseases and Environmental Breakdowns

The story of English colonization in southern Dawnland is often narrated as a tragic encounter between the unstoppable devastation of European diseases and the biologically deficient Algonquians peoples. The foundational settlements for the English conquest of the North American landscapes – Plymouth in 1621 and the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629 – against their French and Dutch rivals were only possible, as the story has been told, due to biologically immune-deficient Native Americans who were defenseless against European diseases that purged the land for its inevitable procurement by the European invaders. Neal Salisbury states the narrative clearly: "Among the Indians, those in southern New England were especially vulnerable because of the combination of depopulation through epidemic disease and the region's demonstrated capacity for supporting intensive settlement and cultivation; among the European countries concerned, England was the best prepared to take advantage of such a situation."[45] From this perspective, Algonquian societies were not only unprepared for the imperialistic efforts of Europeans but were wholly incapable of withstanding the deadly impact of European microbes, passively struggling against the continuing waves of disease with little to

[45] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 9.

no chance of survival. In fact, many of these narratives claim that Native Americans experienced high death tolls specifically due to colonial disease and their lack of genetic immunity. Karen Kupperman goes as far as saying, "Many diseases were endemic around the whole world in the 16th and 17th centuries, except in America."[46] This perspective reveals very little about the North American world prior to European contact and assumes as if disease was never a significant problem for Natives prior to colonization or, at least, never as devastating nor destructive as European diseases. While it is true that epidemiological outbreaks of plague, measles, typhoid, smallpox, typhus, and tuberculosis did not occur in Dawnland until after European arrival,[47] the idea of a pure North American landscape until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not reflect the Indigenous worldview as Native leaders in southern Dawnland had already developed ritualistic healing practices and spiritual ideas regarding illnesses and disease before the French, Dutch, and English arrived.[48] To be sure, the historical emphasis on the impact of European diseases during the early colonization period is significant, but it must be balanced in relation to other ecological factors.

In recent historiography, Paul Kelton, David S. Jones, James D. Rice, and Alan C. Swedlund present a narrative of multi-causal factors leading to the depopulation of southern Dawnland during colonial occupation: European diseases, invasive European plants and animal species introduced into the Dawnland environment, disruption of Indigenous land and food sources, and unparalleled political action and warfare.[49] These scholars detach the narrative of

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[46] Karen Kupperman, *Settling with The Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1640* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), 5.
[47] Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, No. 2 (April, 1976): 289 and Kupperman, *Settling with The Indians*, 5.
[48] Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 203.
[49] James D. Rice, "Early American Environmental Histories," *William and Mary Quarterly* 75, No. 3 (July, 2018): 401; Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 2-3; David S. Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited," *William and Mary*

epidemics from biologically deterministic arguments and replace them with perspectives reflecting disruptive changes to Native ecology, social patterns, and the Indigenous political landscape. Many disturbances created by English colonization caused social and political difficulties that placed high levels of stress on Native societies, especially on community leaders. As a result, southern Dawnland in the early seventeenth century went through a process of ecological and political changes that created sacred disruptions challenging traditional sources of power and creating space for new leaders to emerge in search of new spiritual stability.

The ravaging of southern Dawnland resources by colonists did not begin until the early seventeenth century, but Algonquian peoples had been living on the rich soil with its abundant resources for centuries. According to Rice, "the Native people they encountered had lived there for hundreds of generations and had long since worked out a mostly sustainable seasonal round of gathering, hunting, fishing, and cultivating domesticated plants and a complex set of commonly understood use rights to those resources."[50] The people of the Dawnland[51] shaped and were shaped by the landscape and natural resources that the environment produced for hundreds and thousands of years before European exploration. In fact, it was the environmental prosperity of the region that appealed so strongly to the European explorers that first traveled and surveyed its stunning landscape. By the sixteenth century, fisheries from French, Portuguese, and English ships constantly frequented the coast of Dawnland during the summer months and many

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Quarterly 60, No. 4 (Oct., 2003): 705; and Alan C. Swedlund, "Contagion, Conflict, and Captivity in Interior New England: Native American and European Contacts in the Middle Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts, 1616-2004," in *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America*, edited by Catherine Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan Swedlund (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 149. For an example of how the multi-causal paradigm of disease, environment, and warfare similarly impacted Native Americans in the southeast region, see C. R. Elliot, "'Through Death's Wilderness': Malaria, Seminole Environmental Knowledge, and the Florida Wars of Removal," *Ethnohistory* 71, No. 1 (Jan., 2024): 3-25.

[50] Rice, "Early American Environmental Histories," 401.

[51] A list of the Indigenous peoples of the area includes Pequot, Narrangansett, Mohegan, Schaghticoke, Nipmuc, Pennacook, Sokoki, Abenaki, Passamaquoddy, Micmac, Penobscot and Maliseet, see Strobel, *Native Americans of New England*, 8.

attempted to scout the land for suitable colony locations.[52] William Cronon explains that the abundance of animal and plant life was part of the region's incredible appeal to European travelers that left its foreign visitors "dumbfounded."[53] Contact between Dawnland Algonquians and European fishermen continued as sailors came ashore to prepare their cargo for the journey back to Europe and traded European goods for many of the Native fur goods that attracted many traders to the region. Additionally, the contact between Native Americans and Europeans led to microbial exchanges with unforeseen consequences and long-lasting effects on both Indigenous lands and populations.

The epidemic of 1616-17 impacted the Massachusetts and Wampanoag populations dramatically as English groups began to settle in the coastal regions and fortified trade connections with their Indigenous neighbors. Some historians argue that the devastating impact of European diseases occurred due to virgin soil epidemics and the genetic vulnerability of Native Americans during the Contact Period. Alfred Crosby argues that virgin soil epidemics were "those in which the populations at risk have had no previous contact with the diseases that strike them and are therefore immunologically almost defenseless." His biologically deterministic argument suggests that Dawnland peoples were unable to stop the spread of European diseases once interaction began due to a lack of immunity, and, not long after, the deadly diseases spread quickly as "lighting matches into tinder."[54] In other words, Natives engaging in European trade and exploration simply succumbed to their genetic disposition and left open the possibility of European advancement through imperialism. The disappearance of the Indigenous settlement of Patuxet, eventually becoming the site of the Plymouth colony in

[52] Kupperman, *Settling with The Indians*, 12-13.
[53] William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 22.
[54] Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," 289-290.

1621, is traditionally used to justify these biologically deterministic narratives of history.[55] Henry Dobyns, who also holds to the immune-deficiency argument, says that disease transfer most likely occurred due to European fishermen and fur traders who were seasonally interacting with coastal Native groups that lacked immunity to European diseases.[56] Thomas Morton's vivid picture of the Massachusett region as a place of "skulls and bones" after disease ravaged the landscape expresses the severity of the epidemiological decay in Indigenous communities.[57] Even though Dawnland societies on the eastern shores were cast into disarray and chaos with the spread of European diseases, the lack of immunity perspective has within recent studies been thoroughly contested by other environmental historians.

On the other hand, the multi-causal model of depopulation in North America disputes the veracity of genetic vulnerability claims by proposing social and ecological reasons for the spread of European diseases. Paul Kelton argues that the "virgin-soil" approach does not explain the full complexity of Europe's biological effect on Native Americans because it does not consider environmental circumstances and "disease ecology."[58] It is important to note first that North American peoples dealt with diseases, like Hepatitis B, that crossed over the Bering Strait with their hunter-gatherer ancestors.[59] Native Americans did not escape viruses as if their state of health was uncompromisable until the arrival of Europeans; they coexisted with different microbes and viruses in the same way other groups did around the world. European husbandry is exceptional considering how some animal-to-human diseases did not occur among Algonquians prior to contact who never had cows, pigs, or horses that carried microbial illnesses. Kelton

[55] Strobel, *Native Americans of New England,* 73.
[56] Henry Dobyns, "Disease Transfer at Contact," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (Jan., 1993): 279.
[57] Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Boston: Prince Society, 1883), 132-133, https://archive.org/details/newenglishcanaan00mort/mode/2up.
[58] Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 1.
[59] *Ibid*., 26.

states that it would have been unlikely for zoonotic infections like bubonic plague to survive the transatlantic crossing,[60] which means the 1616-1617 epidemic of Dawnland must have been something else. A. C. Swedlund states that other diseases, such as yellow fever or chicken pox, could have been the culprits of the 1616-1617 epidemic, but the information on the microbes remains inconclusive.[61]

The environmental aspects of New England also played a role in the transmission and exposure to deadly disease in terms of dietary and nutritional factors. Dawnland winters were harsh and created food shortages, according to Swedlund, that led to "dietary stress and nutritionally related diseases," which undoubtedly increased the probability of disease exposure and spread.[62] The trading network between Algonquians enabled them to last the winter season by maintaining enough food sources for community survival. When Indigenous leaders traded with Europeans to access limited resources and rare goods, the new source came with deadly consequences. Nipmuck peoples integrated into the ecological and economic systems of their coastal allies were likely impacted by this fatal infection. It is difficult to assess how far the contagion spread inland, but the resulting closure of trade networks and limited access to the coast must have had significant consequences for interior groups. Though a lack of information on the microbes responsible for the 1616-1617 epidemic allows the details of the event to remain contestable, focusing on stress factors caused by environmental and social issues helps explain why the epidemics impacted the southeastern region of Dawnland and its Native communities so forcefully.

[60] Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 35.
[61] Swedlund, "Contagion, Conflict, and Captivity in Interior New England," 152.
[62] *Ibid*., 152.

The next major epidemic in 1633-1634 dramatically highlights the long-term impact of colonization by the spread of smallpox and environmental collapse in southern Dawnland. The establishing of the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1629 created further unease among the Massachusett and Wampanoag groups who were already skeptical of English intentions; congruently, the English constantly feared movements of violent "conspiracy" by Natives.[63] Trade networks between the English colonies set the stage for an extensive geographical epidemic. Swedlund argues that "there is no debate that the disease was smallpox" and that while both Native and English groups were impacted, most of the English settlements recovered.[64] Despite their previous exposure to smallpox, some English settlers still contracted the disease and spread it. Bradford's account mentions a few English settlers dying from disease in the late fall, and nearby Natives also being "swept away" by the disease.[65] Part of the explanation for this recovery may have been English knowledge on treating smallpox and other recognizable European diseases.

Through colonial stressors and frequent trade contact made the spread of smallpox more likely, other environmental factors strongly increased its transmissibility. During the summer of 1633, a drought created a severe shortage in food and supplies that impacted both Native and English groups, but the English were still receiving support through their ports.[66] The resulting loss of maize, already poor in protein, iron, and other important nutrients,[67] left Native communities in desperate conditions. Kelton explains that smallpox was devastating because it had a longer communicability period than other acute infectious diseases, and it can remain alive

[63] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 190.
[64] Swedlund, "Contagion, Conflict, and Captivity in Interior New England," 152.
[65] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1952), 260.
[66] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 190.
[67] Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 13.

outside of a human body longer and spread farther through trade contact.[68] The multi-causal model of depopulation best explains the 1633-1634 Dawnland epidemic as a product of environmental and nutritional factors, more frequent trade contact, and colonial political stressors.

Indigenous Worldview Connections Between Disease, Death, and Sacred Disruptions

How did Massachusetts, Wampanoags, Nipmucks, and others interpret these diseases and environmental disasters from their own paradigms? Dawnland Algonquians did not view the spiritual world as a strictly separate category from economic, social, and political systems rather understanding their ways of life as deeply connected to the sacred world around them. "To the New England Indian all nature, however its various parts might at times appear in conflict," according to Howard Russell, "was a single whole, formed, all of it, by the creator and thus to a certain degree sacred."[69] The people of Dawnland were deeply aware of and ceremonially intertwined with their animate landscape that was filled with other-than-human beings that they respected and honored out of a necessity for sacred balance. Roger Williams, in observing the religious perspective of the Narragansetts, states that "They generally say that God [*manitou*] made all people, however, although they do not deny that Englishman's God made English men […] Yet, they also believe their Gods made them and the Heaven and Earth where they live."[70] North American Indigenous cosmologies in the seventeenth century, especially the Algonquian paradigm, saw supernatural entities, or other-than-human beings, as intrinsically involved in day-to-day life. Howard adds that "the native sought supernatural favor in preparation for planting,

[68] Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement*, 37.
[69] Howard Russell, *Indian New England Before the Mayflower* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1980), 43.
[70] Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, edited by Dawn Dove, Sandra Robinson, Lorén Spears, Dorothy Herman Papp, and Kathleen J. Bragdon (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2019), 108.

the hunt, or battle, or to avoid a god's wrath for misdemeanors."[71] This emphasis on responsible interaction with the sacred and natural world is what historians often refer to as the balance of reciprocity. Native peoples often worked to live within a certain set of social relationships and standardized respectful and balanced treatments for all animate beings. Kathleen Bragdon states that "Reciprocity among the Ninnimissinuok [southern Dawnland Algonquians] was thus not simply about generosity, or egalitarianism, […] Instead, reciprocity was linked to a different set of expectations about human relationships, about the supernatural, and about nature and its products."[72] Living in balanced relationships within the Dawnland world meant recognizing the interconnectedness of human beings and other-than-human beings in everyday affairs, and participating in the correct habits and activities that honored the sacred network of these relationships.

When these spiritual interactions disintegrated and stability turned into chaos, Indigenous communities felt the consequences of an imbalanced world, which often affected both communal health and food abundance. "I have heard a poor Indian lamenting the loss of a child at the break of day call to his wife, children, and everyone near to grieve with him," says Williams, "and, with an abundance of tears cry out, 'O God, you have taken away my child! You are angry with me.'" The idea of spiritual imbalance leading to tragic and disastrous physical circumstances reflects the interconnectedness of the Algonquian community with the sacred world. Williams even states that when there is "an ordinary accident, a fall, for example, they will say God was angry and did it, *musquántum manit*, [meaning] God is angry."[73] Bragdon states that spiritual power "was inextricably linked to ideas of health and well-being among the Ninnimissinuok."[74]

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[71] Russell, *Indian New England Before the Mayflower,* 45.
[72] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*, 134.
[73] Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, 108.
[74] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, *1500-1650*, 198-199.

Like in Eliot's story of the Native dream and man in black, the spiritual world was deeply connected to tragic events, and the belief that other-than-human beings directly engaged in those events was intrinsic to the Indigenous worldview. Algonquian belief that a "God", or rather a *manitou*, was disturbed by the actions of the Native community made sense to those who also interpreted their "sin" in relation to reciprocal imbalance, particularly a breakdown of the sacred world.

Disease and illness were generally perceived as spiritual imbalances between an individual and their world, or, as in worst case scenarios, an imbalance within the entire community. Edward Winslow narrates an interaction between Tisquantum, Hobbamock, and the colonists in May 1622 that demonstrates how the Wampanoags viewed the English and their connection to the spiritual world as the cause and problem of disease outbreak and death. "Tisquantum, who to the end he might possess his Countrymen with the greater fear of us, and so consequently of himself," according to Edward Winslow, "told them we had the plague buried in our store-house, which at our pleasure we could send forth to what place or people we would, and destroy them therewith."[75] In William Bradford's reflection on Tisquantum, he notes that "Squanto [Tisquantum] sought his own ends and played his own game" in constructing an Indigenous view of the English as a powerful people over whom he had control and whom he represented in the Dawnland political sphere, a portrayal which the Pokanoket sachem Massasoit vehemently resented. This political "game" that Tisquantum pursued to acquire new prestige and power can also be seen within Winslow's aforementioned story of the English storehouse of disease. Bradford notes that other Wampanoags believed Tisquantum's tale of the English plague and his ability to control it, "which did much terrify the Indians and made them depend more on

[75] Kelly Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow: A Scholarly Edition* (Amherst: University of Massachusett Press, 2014), 66.

him, and seek more to him, than to Massasoit."[76] To assert control and authority over the English in the Algonquian political world was to also claim command over their sources of spiritual power. "The ground being broke in the middest of the house, (where-under certain barrels of power were buried, though unknown to him) Hobbamock asked him what it meant? To whom he [Tisquantum] readily answered; That was the place wherein the plague was buried, whereof he formerly told him and others," according to Winslow's account. His narrative, although absurd to the English settlers, represents the Algonquian understanding of spiritual sources of power in the world, particularly in navigating places connected to the world-below. Hobbamock later asked the English people whether or not they truly had power over the plagues and placed them in the ground, and they "answered no; But the God of the English had it in store, and could send it at his pleasure to the destruction of his and our enemies."[77] Though the English asserted that they did not store disease in the ground, they clearly communicated to Hobbamock that their other-than-human being controlled it and certainly would use it if necessary, giving credence to their Algonquian belief that the English truly did have connections to the sacred world.

A Native ritual and medicinal specialist, known as a powwow, ceremonially dealt with the spiritual imbalance between a person or their community and the natural and supernatural world. Indigenous women, knowledgeable in earthly resources to remedy bodily ailments and wounds, acted as bodily healers in many Algonquian communities,[78] but some afflictions, deriving from negative spiritual forces at work, needed the specialized care of a powwow with tremendous spiritual power. Daniel Gookin in 1674 wrote that "men and women, whom they call powwows […] are partly wizards and witches […] and make use, at least in show, of herbs and

[76] Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 99; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 122-123.
[77] Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow*, 66.
[78] Strobel, *Native Americans of New England*, 47-48.

roots, for curing the sick as diseased." He suggests that the powwows have a "familiarity with the devil" to support their abilities to perform "wonders."[79] Williams observes that powwows act as "medicine people, or healers" and he or she "comes close to the sick person, and performs many strange actions around him to threaten and conjure out the sickness." His records note that the Narragansett believed that there is "divine power within the body of a person,"[80] which reflects the natural, complex connection between a human and the sacred world.

Rebecca Tannenbaum states this idea in simple, clear terms: "For most Native Americans, the ability to heal was an expression of spiritual power." These sacred healers often used ceremonial objects charged with otherworldly power to assist in performing rituals of restoration and balance that invoked the aid of other-than-human beings.[81] Singing, chanting, dancing, herbal remedies, tobacco smoking, hot or cold baths, and other types of practices were often used by Northeastern Algonquian peoples in ritual practices of regaining health, power, and sacred stability.[82] Influential powwows had great supernatural abilities and deep connections to Dawnland *manitou* for assistance in controlling these imbalances and breakdowns. In the missionary tract, *New Englands First Fruits* tells a story of a Christian Native man named Wequash who was sick and dying, so his family called for a powwow against the will of the Puritan pastors. The Algonquian shaman told the family, "If Jesus Christ say that Wequash shall live, then Wequash must live; if Jesus Christ say that Wequash shall dye, then Wequash is

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[79] Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England: Of Their Several Nations, Numbers, Customs, Manners, Religion and Government, Before the English Planted There* (Boston: Apollo Press, 1792; Reprint, Gale Research: Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Series), 14.
[80] Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, 111.
[81] Rebecca Tannenbaum, *Health and Wellness in Colonial America* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2012), 40-41.
[82] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*, 217-230; Russell, *Indian New England Before the Mayflower*, 35-42; and Tannenbaum, *Health and Wellness in Colonial America*, 40-42.

willing to dye, and will not lengthen out his life by any such meanes."[83] With brevity and forthright clarity, the powwow refused to help. Abandoning the sacred methods of the Indigenous healers for Puritan medicinal practices was contentious and spiritually charged, and, in this case, led to firm competition between Anglo and Native spiritual leaders. In the case of Wequash, the necessary manipulation of spiritual objects and sacred space by a powwow was not likely to occur under Puritan surveillance due to their interpretation of Native spirituality as a religion of the Devil.

When exposed to rapidly spreading waves of European epidemics, southern Dawnland communities were devastated, and many powwows lost influence and prestige due to their inability to restore balance. As Henry Bowden and James Ronda note, the leadership influence of a powwow "depended on individual performance" and "expanded or contracted according to the practical benefits they could provide."[84] European diseases and their high death tolls in the early decades of the seventeenth century created waves of sacred disruptions that placed the spiritual power and supernatural abilities of powwows in question, yet additional disastrous weather and severe droughts likely compounded growing frustrations with incapable Indigenous spiritual leaders. With the failure of powwows to restore balance between Native communities and the sacred world, Dawnland political tensions grew throughout the 1630s giving new opportunities for sachems to bring spiritual restoration to a world unfolding in turmoil.

The Pequot War and Diplomacy as a Form of Sacred Renewal

The Pequot War in 1636-1637 continued the sacred disruptions and colonial stressors on Indigenous peoples, militarily establishing the English as a legitimate political player in the

[83] Anonymous, "New England First Fruits," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 62.
[84] John Eliot, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction*, edited by Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 14.

complex Dawnland polity. While the English settlements expanded in the early seventeenth century, they were primarily dependent on neighboring Algonquians for survival, and often were incorporated into the existing diplomatic landscape. At the same time, major Native groups and their sachems fought for political, military, and spiritual power by forcing into submission other less powerful sachems into their cause. Because of these factors, English power in 1636 was still considered a minor threat by the more influential Wampanoags, Narragansetts, and Pequots who had a longer and more potent authority over Dawnland peoples. Historians continue to debate the beginnings of the Anglo-Pequot War and which Native groups were involved in the killings of English traders. It is unclear whether the Pequots were directly responsible for the death of John Stone, but evidence does suggest that the Pequots shared some involvement.[85] Growing tensions from English land-grabbing and political-economic conflicts aggravated the developing problems between the European newcomers and the Pequots.

Historians writing about the war have tended to emphasize the English utilization of their military might and of their Native allies to overcome their common enemy, but the success of the English also included environmental factors. According to Katherine Grandjean, Dawnland suffered through a series of disasters prior to the war:

> A great hurricane blasted through the colonies in 1635, destroying much of that year's harvest; harsh cold followed. Yet in the same moment, the colonies were also expanding wildly. […] Crops failed and cattle died just as waves of new immigrants put sudden stresses on New England's ability to provide for itself.[86]

Other Indigenous groups who also experienced the same environmental impact sought to assert their own power over their Native enemies amid a severe, regional breakdown. Consequently,

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[85] Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, 3rd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 123; and Alfred A. Cave, "Who Killed John Stone? A Note on the Origins of the Pequot War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 49, No. 3 (July, 1992): 516, 518-519.
[86] Katherine Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming Pequot War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 68, No.1 (January, 2011): 77.

the destruction of the Pequot fort on Mystic River was the decisive turning point leading to English dominance in the war, but it was not without the assistance and guidance of the Mohegans and Narragansetts.[87] Naturally, the Narragansetts, who initially did not take sides in the war, leaped at the opportunity to decimate the Pequots in hopes of absorbing their remaining peoples and gaining further supremacy in the turbulent region.[88] The English view of warfare, however, was not like the small Native skirmishes that were "more symbolic [of power] than threatening."[89] English force in Dawnland often ended with the complete destruction of farms, homes, forts, and everyone unwilling to surrender, which at times included women and children. This total-war approach horrified Algonquians involved in the Pequot War and secured English power within the diplomatic landscape of Dawnland. In the end, Vaughan states that "the other New England Indians trembled at the thoroughness of the English victory."[90]

Smaller Indigenous groups, like the Nipmuck peoples, played important roles within the Pequot War and post-war political restructurings. Some of the western Nipmuck groups were socio-politically aligned with the Pequots. When they lost their territory to Anglo-Native forces, many Pequot communities consequently sought refuge in their northern Nipmuck allies. The Massachusett Bay colony attempted to avoid sending their militia to invade Nipmuck country while the Narragansetts pressed at the opportunity to hunt down remaining Pequots. Gaining diplomatic and spiritual power in the Native perspective was assimilating through defeating their foes, acquiring their minor tributaries and prestige goods, and assimilating their communal lands. The Narragansett leaders hoped to establish themselves as the primary political power in southern Dawnland after the Pequot War while the English colonials adamantly encouraged the

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[87] Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier,* 144.
[88] Ed White, "The Pequot Conspirator," *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 81, No. 3 (2009): 464.
[89] Kupperman, *Settling with The Indians*, 55.
[90] Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 149-150.

rooting out of the Pequot survivors entirely. Rather than joining late in a losing fight, two western Nipmuck leaders in 1637 desired to make peace with Massachusett Bay colony; Narragansett leaders, with their allied eastern Nipmuck forces, battled against the remaining Pequots.[91] The separation and disunity between different Native groups in Nipmuck country is one results of the colonial epidemics and harsh warfare.

The Pequot War, rather than bringing the desired sacred stability to the disruptions caused by English colonialism, continued to perpetuate spiritual breakdowns. Warfare for Northeast Algonquian peoples was both a cultural and spiritual affair. R. Todd Romero discusses the importance of warfare for Indigenous men in defining their masculinity, spiritual prowess, and social standing in connection with their ability to manipulate the power of other-than-human beings, like Hobbomock, on the battlefield.[92] One method of controlling these powers was the use of European muskets as both a show of spiritual dominance and of lethal force. David J. Silverman points to the words Indigenous peoples used to refer to firearms such as "Thunderstick" or "Thunderbolt," which directly correlated with the other-than-human being known as the Thunderbird. Some Native muskets were also decorated with a brass side plate with the Horned Serpent to reflect their spiritual connection to the world-below.[93] Establishing a connection between the spiritual worlds and the battlefield with sacred-powered weapons helped warriors promote their strength and skill in their communities. Moreover, Native skirmishes traditionally allowed for individual social and political power to expand as the warrior asserted themselves in unique and successful ways, particularly in the practice of mourning wars.

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[91] Dennis A. Connole, *The Indians of the Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 34-36.
[92] R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 141-155.
[93] David J. Silverman, *Thundersticks: Firearms and the Violent Transformation of Native America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 11-12.

Both Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples in Northeast America utilized warfare as a means of restoring the social, political, and spiritual balance within their communities during periods of dramatic change and crisis. When a member of the Indigenous community died, kidnapping victims of warfare was initiated as a means of either satiating that grief through ritual death or replacing the role of the deceased. Daniel Richter defines this act as "mourning wars" that was a symbolic method of "restoring lost population, ensuring social continuity, and dealing with death" through rituals of grieving.[94] Families who lost members often called for mourning wars to carry out the ceremonially grieving process. The loss of life in kinship groups such as family or clan caused physical and spiritual pain and instability that frequently pushed Algonquian peoples to send war parties on rivaling neighbors in hopes to restore spiritual and social stability within the community.[95] The Pequot War presented itself as an opportunity for Massachusett, Wampanoags, and Narragansett warriors to display their spiritual powers in battle and restore sacred balance in their communities through mourning wars against the Pequot nation.

The ravaging effects of European diseases, environmental disasters, and English imperialistic efforts plagued Native communities in southern Dawnland driving them to work alongside the European newcomers for the opportunity of peace. Unfortunately, the battle of Fort Mystic hardly provided these opportunities. As the total-war model of English warfare made mourning war captives scarce and the collecting of war articles for social prestige limited. The fear Native warriors expressed in the Pequot annihilation was from both English severity in war and the consequences of deviating from the cultural customs that stabilized the sacred world of

[94] Daniel Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly* 40, No. 4 (October 1983): 529.
[95] Matthew Kruer, "Bloody Minds and Peoples Undone: Emotion, Family, and Political Order in the Susquehannock-Virginia War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, No. 3 (July, 2017): 401-436.

their Indigenous communities. Tensions continued to rise post-Pequot War due to Narragansett attempts to assimilate the remaining Pequot peoples as they continued these mourning wars as stabilizing patterns for spiritual balance. "While English soldiers may well have appeared effeminate and spiritually bereft to Indians at the onset of the Pequot War," according to Romero, "such perceptions seem to have changed by the conflict's end."[96] The destruction of Fort Mystic led to a new perception of English power in the Dawnland landscape, and the onset of English expansion made diplomacy with the new settlers important for neighboring Natives. Indigenous peoples struggled in the aftermath of war and disease to remain stabilized and resist English attempts of land acquisition and aggression. Finding it impossible to fight rival Native groups while threats increased from the multiplying English towns and other regional Native enemies, Massachusett, Wampanoag, and Nipmuck leaders sought to diplomatically align themselves with the English who had established themselves as a people of political and spiritual power. By March 8, 1644, five sachems – Cutshamekin, Masconomo, Nashowanon, Wossamegon, and the "Squaw Sachem" – submitted themselves and their people to the Massachusetts General Court and united themselves with the English colonies.[97]

Continuing Contagions and Spiritual Integration in John Eliot's Missions

The beginning of the Puritan missions in 1646 continued the destructive waves of colonial epidemics and the degenerative sacred disruptions in Native American communities. John Eliot made few accomplishments in his first-year evangelizing to the Massachusett peoples, but he had tremendous success among the politically allying minor Nipmuck community. This distinction leads to a simple question: why did one Native group find the Puritan message so

[96] R. Todd Romero, "'Ranging Foresters' and 'Women-Like Men': Physical Accomplishment, Spiritual Power, and Indian Masculinity in Early-Seventeenth-Century New England," *Ethnohistory* 53, No. 2 (2006): 302.
[97] Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 30.

compelling while others did not? To answer this question, one must consider the idea of sacred disruptions and the Indigenous view of the world. As previously discussed, the Native peoples of Dawnland began to interpret the Christian religion as another source of sacred power related to their cosmological world. They also connected the *manitou* of the new foreigners to the spiritual disorders that were occurring through disease, famine, and socio-political breakdowns.

Within the religious dialogue of colonial encounters, Massachusett, Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Nipmuck peoples integrated the Puritan dualism of Jehovah and Satan into their Algonquian cosmology. The world-above and the world-below represented spiritual worlds that were ruled by powerful other-than-human persons – the Thunderbird and the Horned Serpent.[98] Dawnland Algonquians referred to the Thunderbird as *Kiehtan* (also known as *Cautantowwit*) and the Horned Serpent as *Cheepi* (also known as *Hobbomock*), with the two spiritual beings in primordial conflict with each other.[99] Winslow describes *Kiehtan* as a being "who dwelleth above in the Heavens" and created humans and the rest of the world, who returns Indigenous ceremonial honor and respect with earthly blessings, but can become angry and create diseases "whom none can cure." *Cheepi*, on the other hand, can appear in many shapes – as a man, deer, eagle, or a snake – and grant power to "cure their wounds and diseases." Like other Puritan accounts, Winslow associated the Horned Serpent of the world-below with the Christian Devil.[100] Shepard notes that Christianizing Natives openly teach "that Chepian, i.e. the devil is naught," and they ask their local powwow, "If God bee the author of all good, why doe

[98] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, *1500-1650*, 184-190.
[99] Alvin H. Morrison and David A. Ezzo, "Dawnland Dualism in Northeastern Regional Contact," *Papers of the Sixteenth Algonquian Conference* 16 (November 1, 1985): 140-141.
[100] Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow,* 103. Roger Williams writes that the Narragansett likewise believe in a "God" that created the world, rules the afterlife, and expresses anger over human depravity, with other Natives worshipping the Devil. See Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, 108-118.

you pray to Chepian the devill?"[101] The English ministers clearly interpreted Algonquian spirituality within their Christian worldview, with both *Cheepi* and Satan sharing similar characteristics and forms, particularly as a snake. Silverman argues that the Puritans translated English Christian spiritual beliefs into Algonquian terminology that connected Satan with *Cheepi* while keeping English words such as Jehovah, God, and Jesus Christ in their transliterated form.[102] This approach, of course, was decided for both practical and theological reasons. Ministers did not want their Indigenous converts linking the Christian God with other non-Christian spiritual beings, but that did not stop Algonquians from interpreting the English *manitou* within their own cosmological perspective.

Praying town Natives associated the characteristics and powers of *Kiehtan* with Jehovah, the English *manitou*, through his power of disease and immense anger over sin. When the English arrived and epidemics decimated Native communities, Dawnland Algonquians interpreted the unceasing waves of disease and death as sacred disruptions caused by *Kiehtan*, who they slowly disassociated with over time. "It seemeth they are various in their religious worship in a little distance, and grow more and more cold in their worship to Kiehtan; saying in their memory he was much more called upon," according to Winslow.[103] As the world-above remained silent to Algonquian requests for aid, Native communities pursued the assistance of the Horned Serpent for healing and stability, but the deadly diseases continued to proliferate throughout Algonquian communities. Eliot expressed to his Indigenous audience in 1646 that he came to "bring you good newes from the great God Almighty maker of Heaven and Earth, and to

[101] Thomas Shepard, "The Day-Breaking, If Not The Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 97.
[102] David J. Silverman, "Indians, Missionaries, and Religious Translation: Creating Wampanoag Christianity in Seventeenth-Century Martha's Vineyard," *William & Mary Quarterly* 62, No. 2 (Apr. 2005): 151-160.
[103] Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow,* 106.

tell you how evill and wicked men may come to bee good," and "how angry God was for any sinne and transgression."[104] The message was clear: the Puritan God, who created all things, was angry. Moreover, the English *manitou* functioned in similar capacities as *Kiehtan*: the creator of the worlds, angered over the disruption of their reciprocal relationship, and punished humans for their wickedness.

Indigenous listeners intuitively understood Eliot's descriptions of the other-than-human being in the world-above. In the following question-and-answer session, one Native inquirer asked Eliot, "Doe you beleeve the things that are told you, viz, that God is musquantum, i.e. very angry for the least sinne in your thoughts, or words, or works?" The Puritan's response was, "Yes, and hereupon wee set forth the terrour of God against sinners," but those who repent of their sin will "live in all blisse with Jehovah the blessed God."[105] The questioners comprehended that the Puritan *manitou* was angry and conveyed similar characteristics to their *Kiehtan*. Viewing the English religion through their own cosmological framework, Dawnland Natives interpreted the world through acts of spiritual integration. The *Cheepi-Satan* correlation likewise transferred to the *Kiehtan-Jehovah* comparison in the religious dualisms of Algonquian and English paradigms. From the very beginning of these cross-cultural dialogues, the Indigenous communities understood that the English brought with them a sacred power that led to both sacred disruptions and – on meeting certain conditions with their *manitou* – a spiritual remedy.

The Puritan missionary tracts record many instances of colonial diseases in the Native communities surrounding the Bay colony and the impact these seasonal epidemics had on the Christian Native communities. In November of 1646, Thomas Shepard notes that "there be but a

[104] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 88.
[105] *Ibid*., 91.

few that are left alive from the Plague and Pox, which God sent into those parts."[106] The ministers recognized early into their efforts that many of the smaller communities they encountered had larger populations during their initial period of colonizing the region, but year after year epidemics swept over Native societies that causing social upheaval and impending doubts about their spiritual leaders. In 1647, Eliot answered a question that was "several times propounded" regarding the Christian faith and healing: "If they leave off Powwawing, and pray to God, what shall they do when they are sick?" The solution that he offered the concerned Natives was to adopt the English procedures for medicinal healing and to "pray unto God, whose gift Physick is, and whose blessing must make it effectuall."[107] Medicine and spiritual power were deeply connected for both the Puritan pastor and the Algonquian listener, and these questions about sickness and spirituality became a commonly repeated theme within the missionary tracts.

Thomas Mayhew Jr. writes multiple accounts of local Indigenous men, two elderly and one young, on Martha's Vineyard who were on their deathbeds when their families asked for his assistance. In these accounts, their powwows tried to heal them, but, in each case, failed, which the Puritan attributed to their "weaknesse and wickednesse of the Pawwaws power." From an early standpoint in the missionary activities, a competitive spiritual battle occurred between Native powwows and Puritan pastors who vied for absolute claims to sacred power against each other. The Puritan tracts often allude to the power of Christian beliefs, practices, and medicine in cases of successful healings and make note of the involvement and failures of Native healers when the individual died. Indigenous peoples repeatedly went back and forth between powwows and pastors in seeking aid for their sick family members, usually at the displeasure of spiritual

[106] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 94.
[107] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 129-130.

leaders on both sides. This back-and-forth activity suggests that Indigenous communities believed that both spiritual avenues had access to sacred sources of power for healing purposes and many Native peoples took advantage of the new spiritual economy to their own benefit and survival.[108]

In the *Tears of Repentance* tract, the confessions of Native Christians to the English elders of the Roxbury church in 1652 often include a story of their own sickness, or of their family and friends, that eventually pushed them to pray to the English God. Totherswamp said that "if my friends should die, and I live, I then would pray to God; soon after, God so wrought, that they did almost all die […] then my heart feared greatly, because God was angry for all my sins."[109] Robin Speene states the perspective on sacred disruptions and the Puritan experience clearly: "I see God is angry with me for all my sins, and hath afflicted me by the death of three of my children, and I fear God is still angry."[110] Their interpretation of the spiritual world directly correlated to the physical, natural world around them day-to-day, and the unrelenting spread of disease and death was associated with disturbing and angering the other-than-human being of the world-above. In this way, Puritan theology and Algonquian cosmology distinctively collided within multiple ideological layers of mutual understandings. Sacred disruptions, particularly in the form of European epidemics and environmental breakdowns, became the catalyst that made the Algonquian spiritual integration of the Christian *manitou* possible. Within the Indigenous confessions, Puritanizing Natives of the praying towns integrated the English Christian faith into

[108] Edward Winslow, "The Glorious Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians of New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 148-149.
[109] John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Jr., "Tears of Repentance: Or, A Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 269.
[110] *Ibid*., 285.

their cosmological worldview rather than rejecting it because they believed the English *manitou* was truly the solution and remedy to their sacred imbalances.

Summary

Southern Dawnland became a world disrupted by sacred powers and foreign peoples. Colonialism set off a string of events – disease, food shortages, warfare, and socio-political alliances – that had calamitous results for Algonquian communities. As the English settlers rooted into the socio-political framework of Dawnland after the Pequot War, Native peoples actively interpreted, and spiritually integrated, the Christian religion into their cosmological worldview to make sense of the disastrous events. Many concluded that the English people and their *manitou* caused the disruption of their natural and spiritual world. The Native dreamer with his vision of the black man believed that the Puritan ministers represented the angry *manitou* and that by following their message he would keep his family safe. With English successes in healing the sick, this vision seemed to come to truly life. The small Nipmuck group, who was led by their advantageous leader Waban, embraced John Eliot and the Puritan message in 1646 because they desired to bring stability to their families, their community, and their Algonquian sacred world. With the rise of a new source of spiritual power came a spiritual competition between individual leaders who sought to gain new connection to the sacred world.

Chapter III

WABAN

It was their fourth meeting in the cold, harsh winter of December 1646. Still learning the Algonquian language, John Eliot ministered among Waban's Nipmuck community through times of prayer, catechism, and question-and-answer dialogue. With the winter season setting in, however, Eliot chose to use this meeting, as it may have been the last until early spring, to preach a short sermon on the book of Ezekiel. Within *The Eliot Tracts* exists multiple versions of, or rather thoughtful reflections on, this assembly, with each author expressing their own judgements of the meeting. Thomas Shepard's first account states that "the children being catechized, and that place of Ezekiel touching the dry bones being opened, and applied to their condition." This first tract mentioning the Ezekiel sermon is very unassuming and lacks descriptive information about the Indigenous community's initially response. "The Indians offered all their children to us to bee educated amongst us, and instructed by us," as Shepard continues, "complaining to us that they were not able to give anything to the English for their education."[111] In short, the Ezekiel sermon had little to no effect on the audience, except that the Native community desired the Puritans to further teach their children about English Christianity. In the next missionary tract published a year later, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, Shepard gives more details regarding the results of the Ezekiel sermon. "It is somewhat observable […] that the first Text out of which Mr. Eliot preached to the Indians was about the dry bones, Ezek. 37. where," from Shepard's account, "it's said, Vers. 9, 10. that by prophesying to the wind, the wind came and the dry bones lived." He additionally notes that the "Indian word for Wind is Waubon," of which the ministers

[111] Thomas Shepard, "The Day-Breaking, If Not The Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 99.

presumably were unaware, and the "most active Indian for stirring up other Indians to seek after the knowledge of God in these parts, his name is Waubon, which signifies Wind." "They never dreamt of this," says Shepard, "that this their Waubon should breathe such a spirit of life and incouragement into the rest of the Indians, as hee hath indeavored in all parts of the Countrey." For Eliot's first sermon among this newly Christianizing Native community, this response from their main leader Waban was certainly an astounding outcome. Even after the event, with the continuation of Puritan preaching, Shepard observes that "the Indians themselves that were stir'd up by him took notice of this his name and that Scripture together."[112]

From the Algonquian viewpoint, the English holy book was a *manitou* – a sacred tool of power – of Christianity,[113] and the linking of the sacred text to Waban through this sermon gave him access to that formidable power. Indigenous peoples of southern Dawnland initially found the English foreigners and their religion inadequate and incomparable to the power of their own spiritual practices. However, through the continuation of colonial stressors and the English imperial expansion after the Pequot War, the spiritual sources of the Puritan Christian religion began to seem worth exploring. Waban and his Nipmuck community were the first to willingly listen, engage, and respond positively to the Puritan pastors. While the Ezekiel sermon moved Waban onto a new spiritual path, it was not without detraction and critique from the Puritan

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[112] Thomas Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel Breaking Forth Upon the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 135.

[113] Algonquians often associated rare artefacts, tools, and objects with potent, spiritual power, and Puritan ministers often encouraged this perspective of the Puritan Bible. See Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 198. Northern Algonquians were very impressed with the sacred nature of books and writings used by Jesuit missionaries, and they connected these objects to their shamanistic oral practices. See James Axtell, "The Power of Print in the Eastern Woodlands," in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86-99. Axtell does argue that Protestant missionaries, such as John Eliot, using the Bible did not have the same reception by the 1670s because the spiritual and mystical value of the foreign (English) language evaporated from the Indigenous mind due to translations of the Bible into the Algonquian dialects. As this chapter will show, Waban's experience in the 1640s and 1650s does have sacred meaning for his Nipmuck community like those of their northern counterparts.

leaders. “The English also have much observed him [Waban] herein, who still continues the same man,” says Shepard, “although we thinke there be now many others whom he first breathed encouragement into that do farre exceed him in the light and life of the things of God.”[114] As this chapter will explore, Waban was both praised and critiqued for his engagements as an Indigenous Nipmuck leader within the Puritanizing Native communities called praying towns. Edward Winslow’s account, which speaks highly of the event and Waban as being “very sedulous for their conversion,” also layers his reflections of the Ezekiel sermon with highly interpretive connections between the Christianizing Natives and the “conversion of Israel, i.e. the 10 Tribes.”[115] A debate raged within the early years of colonial New England about the eschatological and biological nature of Native Americans as potential Jewish descendants from ancient Israel, which typifies the nature of colonial English writings in trying to understand Native origins from their Anglo-European perspective.

In many cases, these Puritan congregational pastors did not understand or seek to interpret Native peoples in respect to their local Indigenous worldviews. Like most Europeans of the time, educated English men sought to press their Christian views onto the colonial landscape of Dawnland and the Indigenous world. Likewise, Nipmuck, Wampanoag, and Massachusett peoples in the missions of New England interpreted the English religion from their own Dawnland paradigm. Rather than immediately viewing the world from a new Anglo-European perspective, Waban accommodated Puritanism as it corresponded to his already-held views on spiritual power – an individual’s ability to control sacred sources and objects for their own agendas – and the nature of human relationships with other-than-human beings. Naturally, the

[114] Shepard, “The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel,” 125.
[115] Edward Winslow, “The Glorious Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England,” in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 164.

Nipmuck leader learned more about Anglo-Christian values and beliefs through Puritan pastors who sought to strictly conform their Native affiliates into godly men and women, but the early years of the praying towns reflect a form of spiritual integration: the act of incorporating Christianity into an Algonquian cosmology and worldview.

As the Nipmuck landscape experienced severe diplomatic, cultural, and environmental transformations from the settling and expansion of English imperialism, Natives sought after new forms of spiritual power to bring stability to the waves of sacred disruption. By the 1640s, Native leaders like Waban encountered, adapted, and survived the destructive crisis of colonialism by maintaining spiritual pathways to ensure both survival and prominence. This chapter will analyze how Waban's affiliation with Puritan Christianity helped him establish new diplomatic and spiritual power for the purpose of revitalizing the socio-political strength and spiritual balance of his community. By embracing new opportunities of cultural persistence, the Nipmuck sachem Waban accommodated English Puritanism by adopting the beliefs and practices that coincided with his Indigenous perspective on disease, spirituality, and political influence.

Was Waban a Nipmuck Sachem or an Elevated English Puppet?

The process of Waban's rise to sachemship and leadership in the Christian Native community of Nonantum has been skeptically scrutinized by modern historians. Francis Jennings's *The Invasion of America* argues that the Puritans propped up Waban's status, who, in his argument, was not a leader or candidate for sachemship at all, to give credence to their colonial endeavors as successful missionaries among the Indigenous population. In Jennings's view, John Eliot's missionary work began as a propaganda machine that intended to satisfy English Parliament's suspicions of New England's faulty theological orthodoxy and colonial dissidence. Previously, in an unfortunate turn of events, none of the sachems who signed the

peace pact of 1644 were interested in adopting the English religion, merely entertaining Eliot's missionary activities throughout 1646 to continue peaceful diplomacy. By October, Eliot and his companions only found one Native individual who expressed any interest in hearing about Puritan Christianity, and his name was Waban. The ministers actively returned that year to Waban's Nonantum community four times to record Indigenous responses to the Puritan faith and print their missionary successes for the English world. Jennings' argument is primarily based on two sources that he claims contradict each other, so he suggests that Waban was never truly a Native sachem but rather an English-supported leader in the Christian missions.[116]

Jennings views, from two comments by Thomas Shepard in *The Day-Breaking*, that the tract reveals how the Puritan ministers first understood Waban's role in his Nipmuck community. Initially, Waban is referred to as the "chief minister of Justice" among his people, and later in the work it says that he is "no Sachem (That is King)."[117] John Winthrop, though, writes that he believes Waban is "a mere sachem" in the region.[118] Jennings emphasizes this confusion as a contradiction of ideas that can only be resolved by arguing that Waban was not a sachem in the "Indian procedures," but rather became a leader of the Christian community because English ministers placed him in that role. Winthrop simply recognized, from Jennings's perspective, that Waban had become a new Native leader but was not supported in his sachemship in the traditional sense. Other historians have agreed with Jennings's assessment and likewise suggest that Waban's rise to leadership was merely the product of Puritan support and the terminology used in Shepard's report.[119] If these quotes were the only references available regarding Waban

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[116] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and The Cant of Conquest* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 239-240.
[117] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 83 and 96.
[118] John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, edited by Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, Abridged Edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 323.
[119] John Eliot, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction*, edited by Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 165; Dennis A. Connole, *The Indians of the*

and his Nipmuck role, this perspective would likely remain undisputed, but other references draw these conclusions into question.

The non-sachem argument makes a few mistakes in accessing sources referring to Waban. First, Jennings's does not include all the information regarding Waban's sachemship of which he was aware of in the missionary literature. In multiple publications, Jennings makes note of the Concord sachem who Thomas Shepard claims was "An inferiour Prince."[120] In the same letter, Shepard also describes the Nipmuck leader of Nonantum as "Wabun (An Indian Sachim)."[121] Jennings' cynical view of Eliot's missions and tracts led him to ignore the available source material concerning Waban's role to make the term sachem the primary dispute. The real issue between the sources is their qualifiers of the title sachem.

This point leads to the second error. Jennings's non-sachem argument blindly accepts the Puritan interpretation of Native sachemship through Anglo monarchial terminology and, therefore, falls into the same misunderstanding the ministers themselves made. In *The Day-Breaking* tract, the term sachem is differentiated from being a king while the *Clear Sun-shine* tract states that some sachems are princes. The confusion, then, is not whether Waban was a sachem, as most sources suggest, but rather what kind of influence he had as a Native sachem. Some Puritan leaders clearly did not fully understand Native polity and the functions of sachems within their own Indigenous contexts. Often, English missionaries of the Massachusett Bay Colony interpreted Algonquian leaders through their own English lenses, but other colonial writers who worked more extensively with their local Algonquian neighbors had a better

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Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750 (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 91-92; David Ress, "Autonomy, Not Assimilation," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 41, No. 1 (July 2022): 33.

[120] Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, 243; Francis Jennings, "Goals and Functions of Puritan Missions to the Indians," *Ethnohistory* 18, No. 3 (Summer, 1971), 206; and Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 114.

[121] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 122.

understanding of the Dawnland political structure. Winslow notes that "Sachims cannot be all called Kings, but only some few of them, to whom the rest resort for protection, and pay homage unto them."[122] Likewise, Roger Williams describes the Narragansett political system as "a type of monarchy," and that the "higher Sachims" protect the "under Sachims" who bring them gifts and goods."[123] In William Bradford's first mentioning of the Wampanoag sachem Massasoit, he calls him a "great Sachem" in comparison to other leaders like Samoset.[124] The European concept of kings and princes does not perfectly apply to the functional role of sachems in southern Dawnland societies, but those monarchial ideas are how Puritan leaders expressed Native sachemship to their English readers.

It seems that the Bay Colony pastors did not clearly understand the hierarchical nature of Algonquian polity and may have originally confused the status of Waban. Moreover, viewing the missionary sources with this understanding allows for a correct interpretation of the material: Waban was a Nipmuck sachem. He was not a king – or a great sachem – as *The Day-Breaking* says, but rather he was a minor sachem incorporated into the tributary system of the great Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin. Shepard clarifies this important difference by calling Waban a Native sachem while recognizing his inferiority to other sachems in the southern Dawnland region. Clearly, Jennings does not analyze these Puritan perspectives of Native polity before he evaluates the missionary sources and ultimately misunderstands what the author of *The Day-Breaking* tract meant by saying Waban was not a king. By clarifying this correction, Waban's

[122] Kelly Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow: A Scholarly Edition* (Amherst: University of Massachusett Press, 2014), 107.
[123] Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, edited by Dawn Dove, Sandra Robinson, Lorén Spears, Dorothy Herman Papp, and Kathleen J. Bragdon (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2019), 119-120.
[124] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 80.

role in the Puritan missions can be correctly understood as an advancement of his sachemship power and authority within the Indigenous political system.

Sacred Disruptions and Waban's Early Religious Development

Prior to the establishment of the Native praying towns in the 1650s, southern Dawnland experienced a radically disastrous social and political breakdown due to colonization, European diseases, and unprecedented warfare. General approximations of the colonial and epidemiological impact range from the lowest estimates of 50 percent to as high as a 90 percent decline of the Native population throughout the seventeenth century. The epidemic of 1616-1617 devasted the coastal regions and led to the temporary abandonment of both European explorers and Native inhabitants. The smallpox epidemic of 1633-1634, a more wide-ranging and deadlier contagion, severely shattered the interior of southern Dawnland.[125] Neal Salisbury compares the outcome of the epidemics to "those left by modern wars and other large-scale catastrophes."[126]

Historical records on the disease impact of southern Dawnland mostly reference the coastal English settlements and their neighboring Native residents, but Nipmuck peoples were likely to have been affected as well. Daniel Gookin gives a brief account of the origins and political landscape of southern Dawnland during the period of English arrival. He notes that the Massachusett, Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Pequot nations were the dominant factions in the region, with many allied subordinate groups under their protection, the most notable being the Nipmuck peoples.[127] By the 1630s, the eastern Nipmuck villages were socio-politically aligned

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[125] Alan C. Swedlund, "Contagion, Conflict, and Captivity in Interior New England: Native American and European Contacts in the Middle Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts, 1616-2004," in *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America*, edited by Catherine Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan Swedlund (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 150-152.
[126] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 103.
[127] Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England: Of Their Several Nations, Numbers, Customs, Manners, Religion and Government, Before the English Planted There* (Boston: Apollo Press, 1792; Reprint, Gale Research: Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Series), 7-8.

with their bordering Native neighbors and interwoven into the tributary system of the nearest great sachems. It is likely that the 1633-34 epidemic, including the drought of 1633,[128] ravaged the traditional homelands of Nipmuck peoples and created an unstable social environment that fragmented their communities and weakened their leadership. The microbial impact left these Native communities in desperate conditions with the loss of leaders who were endowed with traditional knowledge, diplomatic influence, and spiritual power that bonded the community together. Based on Gookin's account of his age, Waban was approximately thirty years old during the catastrophes of English colonialism in the 1630s.[129] Many on the eastern borders of Nipmuck territory desperately joined their communities to their nearby Massachusett neighbors through kinship ties and leadership alliances in order to survive.

As a young Algonquian boy, Waban was skillfully trained and ritually initiated into the special Native role of a *pniese* to be an advisor to his local sachem. In one of his praying town confessions, Waban states: "After [my parents] were dead, others taught me to sin: […] those taught me, said to me, Choose to be a Pauwau: they said, If you be a Pauwau, you may make others to live and if you be a Pauwau, God will blesse you, and make you rich, and a man like God. Then I desired so to do."[130] His desire for spiritual power was instilled at a young age, which was typical for Nipmuck children who expressed exceptional connections to the sacred world. R. Todd Romero notes that the early physical training of Native children was pragmatic for determining individuals with both physical and spiritual skills that could be molded into a fearsome warrior of tremendous spiritual power, which both sachems and powwows

[128] Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 190.
[129] Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England,* 44.
[130] John Eliot, "A Further Account of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 393.

possessed.[131] The difference between the roles of sachem and powwow correlate to the worlds over which the individual expresses power, authority, and control. Powwows conjured supernatural abilities to cure the sick, predict outcomes of future wars, manipulate the weather, and curse their enemies with illness.[132] In associating with powerful other-worldly beings, powwows focused their energy and skills in manipulating the world of those other-than-human beings. Sachems, on the other hand, utilized their supernatural abilities in diplomatic and social measures by persuading foreign, distant peoples into kinship relations and unions of friendship, or – if peace was not an option – by destroying those who placed the balance and power of their community at risk. The world of human beings, then, was controlled by sachems who were supported and endorsed by the leading men and women of the community. As a *pniese*, Waban developed a particular skill set of power that ultimately manifested into the art of persuasion and authority as a ruler over human beings. His reference to God in his childhood narrative was a Native allusion to the spiritual being *Cheepi* (or *Hobbomack*) – a *manitou* associated with the Northeast wind and Underworld Serpent whom Native leaders consulted for both warfare and healing purposes. The cosmology of southern Dawnland was filled with powerful other-than-human beings who connected their personal energies to the Algonquian world and resided within mysterious places, objects, and persons.[133] The instruction Waban received as a child deeply fashioned his desires for spiritual power and his understanding of spiritual world that later helped him interact with the rise of Puritan Christianity.

During the early colonial encounters, Waban's community undoubtedly experienced the impact of European contagions and underwent dramatic leadership changes. It is probable that

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[131] R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 26-27.
[132] Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (University of Oklahoma Press 1996), 201-208; and Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians*, 23-30.
[133] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England,* 184 and 192.

his experiences in the 1620s and 1630s carved out a pathway for his rise to sachemship. With elderly and vulnerable leaders passing away, younger and influential front-runners would have stepped into new roles to guide the people towards innovative ways of restoring spiritual balance in a world falling into chaos and disorder. Powwows may have damaged their power and prestige due to their inability to deal with European diseases, environmental disasters, and obstinate foreigners who did not succumb to malady as radically as they had. Waban gained additional authority through his marriage with the Pawtucket sachem Tahatawan's daughter, Tasunsquaw, that united both of their families and communities together.[134] Despite his momentous triumphs as a Native leader and sachem, Waban was still only a minor sachem under the tributary responsibility and commanding authority of another superior figure. Less influential sachems often were coerced to support more powerful sachems through gift-giving services that maintained communal and land protections, affiliations through kinship relations, and diplomatic loyalty to the great sachem.[135] Through their reorientation alongside their Massachusett neighbors, Waban became a minor Nipmuck sachem and, in order to restore and retain spiritual balance, was incorporated into the tributary system of the great Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin.

Waban's Accommodation of Puritan Power and Dawnland Politics

By 1646, persistent Puritan ministers from the Massachusett Bay Colony proselytized the Massachusetts and Nipmucks, but only Waban's community responded positively to their presence and message. Prior to the Nipmuck invitation, John Eliot promoted his faith among the

[134] Elise M. Brenner, "Strategies for Autonomy: An Analysis of Ethnic Mobilization in Seventeenth-Century Southern New England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1984), 103. Waban's marriage also suggests that he truly was a sachem as a marriage to another sachem's daughter, an individual of the same elite status, was both a diplomatic and social arrangement, see Ann Marie Plane, *Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 5.
[135] Andrew Lipman, "'A Means to Knitt Them Togeather': The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War," *William and Mary Quarterly* 65, No. 1 (January 2008): 10.

Massachusett communities under Cutshamekin's authority, but the Puritan thought they were as "stubborne and rebellious children."[136] While Cutshamekin indifferently entertained the religious message of the English early on, he slowly engaged the Puritan faith despairingly of the changing political dynamic created by the praying towns. Waban's Nipmuck community, on the other hand, actively prepared for regular meetings with the Puritan ministers by constructing more wigwams and asking more questions about Christian beliefs. The stark contrast between the receptiveness of the two sachems' communities suggests a power differential playing out within the missionization efforts of the Puritans. For a comparison, Denise Bossy's argues that a Yamasee leader, "the Prince," engaged in political and "spiritual diplomacy" with the British missionaries in order to establish new alliances and connections to power for the community, which was an Indigenous custom when allying with foreign peoples. [137] Waban similarly bridged a new connection to English spiritual power through political practices and methods that were inherently Native. Access to spiritual power was essential for the sacred balance of all southern Dawnland communities, and the great sachems, like Cutshamekin, had significantly larger support systems than the Nipmuck communities on the margins of colonial boundaries. Therefore, while Waban may have been a newer and less experienced leader in comparison to Cutshamekin, his engagement and acceptance of the Puritan pastors strengthened his prestige as an Algonquian leader. The continual attendance, support, and communication from the religious men of the foreign *manitou*, beckoned at Waban's request, reflected Waban's supernatural abilities to persuade and control other powerful people, slowly integrating Christianity into his Indigenous community. By the end of the sessions, Waban was instructing "all his company out

[136] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 89.
[137] Denise I. Bossy, "Spiritual Diplomacy, the Yamasees, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel: Reinterpreting Prince George's Eighteenth-Century Voyage to England," *Early American Studies* 12, No. 2 (Spring, 2014): 366-401.

of the things which they had heard that day from the Preacher, and prayed among them."[138] These new beginnings encouraged many under Waban's influence to adopt English Christian laws, establishing the first Christianized Native community, called Nonantum.[139]

Establishing a Christian-Native town was a significant step in promoting Waban's prestige as a Native sachem holding the spiritual power of the Puritan sources. By further connecting himself to English *manitou* and settlers, as initiated by the Ezekiel sermon and his affiliation with the Bible, the English further supported Waban with continual speakers, material resources, and finances. "The Indian Sachims shall have libertie to take order in the nature of Summons or Attachments," according to Shepard, "to bring any of their own people to the said Courts, and to keep a Court of themselves." By aligning themselves with the Massachusett Bay Colony, the Nipmuck community was technically placing itself under English control while, practically, the sachems, like Waban, ruled over them in day-to-day affairs. The ruling position of Nonantum even allowed Waban to "appoint Officers to serve Warrants, and to execute the Orders and judgements of either of the said Courts."[140] The English laws set forth reinforced the Nipmuck sachem's power and prestige rather than subverting and minimizing his status. Integrating the community with their English Christian neighbors was a means of gaining sacred balance and spiritual power that enhanced Waban's spiritual rule as a leader.

Waban's connection to the Christian sacred power strengthened his diplomatic influence through his spiritual ability to overcome deadly illnesses and guide other nearby minor sachems into a similar path of political and spiritual renewal in 1647. With waves of epidemics flooding into Dawnland communities every year, sachems struggled to protect their people against rivals

[138] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 95-96.
[139] *Ibid*., 97-98.
[140] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 123.

who desired to take advantage of their weakened community, especially as other-than-human beings were displeased with the Native communities. Waban's authority and power to lead his community derived from his capabilities to utilize Puritan ministers to aid in healing, which came through prayer and faith in the English *manitou*. According to Jason Eden, Native Christians "through their connection with increasingly powerful English neighbors and sometimes through demonstrations of spiritual power (e.g., surviving epidemics), individual Christianized Indians gained respect and status in the eyes of other Native people."[141] Native Christian confessions often emphasized their trust in Christianity to heal the body and the soul against the epidemics that continued to ripple through southern Dawnland.

In 1652, Totherswamp's confession before Christian elders stated that "Before I prayed unto God, […] I thought in my heart, that if my friends should die, and I live, I then would pray to God."[142] Nookau confessed similarly in saying, "Five years ago, before I prayed I was sick, I thought I should die […] then I thought, if there be a God above, and he give life again, then I shall beleeve there is a God above."[143] The destructive threat and seasonal devastation of disease remained an ever-present reality for Nipmuck and Massachusett peoples who lamented that the sacred aspects of their world were out of balance. Through their own actions and words, these Christian Natives interpreted the settlers and their source of spiritual power as a means to bring balance and restore their sacred world. The confession Waban put forth, written down and edited only after he spoke it, is a perfect example of how the praying town Natives integrated the Puritan religion into their cosmological system:

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[141] Jason Eden, "'Therefore Ye Are No More Strangers and Foreigners': Indians, Christianity, and Political Engagement in Colonial Plimouth and on Martha's Vineyard," *American Indian Quarterly* 38, No. 1 (2014): 41.
[142] John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Jr., "Tears of Repentance: Or, A Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 269.
[143] *Ibid*., 291.

> Before I heard of God, […] I wished for riches, I wished to be a witch, I wished to be a Sachem; and many such other evils were in my heart. […] But a little while agoe after the great sikness, I considered what the English do, and I had some desire to do as they do; […] I wondered how the English come to be so strong to labor; then I thought I shall quickly die, and I feared lest I should die before I prayed to God.[144]

As thoroughly argued before, Waban desired from a young age to be a person of tremendous spiritual authority that consolidated wampum beads – shell-crafted materials that conferred spiritual power – to establish himself as the head of a strong tributary system. Unavoidably, the English elders desired for Native to assimilate to Anglo-defined roles, such as Christian or church elder, but that did not stop Native rulers from instead functioning within their Indigenous framework. Yet, after experiencing a "great sikness" and coming close to death, Waban's interest in the English grew, likely correlating with their ability to survive the epidemics and environmental catastrophes. The connection between the sickness and Waban's curiosity in the strength of the Puritans and their *manitou* fundamentally ties into Indigenous views of sacred balance, reciprocity, and spiritual authority. Surviving environmental disasters, expanding English towns, and suppressing resistance through military strength indeed would all have been comprehended as the product of spiritual power. Undoubtedly, Waban interpreted English Christianity as a pathway and means to stabilize his community and sustain control of sacred balance.

Within the praying town of Natick, Waban preached a sermon on the power of the English God to heal colonial sicknesses:

> Goe to Christ the Phisitian; for Christ is a Physitian of souls; he healed mens bodies, but he can heale souls also […] therefore let us see our need of Christ, to heale all our diseases of soul and body.[145]

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[144] Eliot and Mayhew, "Tears of Repentance," 271.
[145] John Eliot, "A Further Accompt of the Progresse of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 333.

In the Indigenous worldview, Native healers had the ability to restore balance and heal both the physical and spiritual aspects of a person, which were abilities intrinsically linked to spiritual sources of power.[146] Christoph Strobel asserts that wampum beads "had spiritual importance in the region as a purifying and protective material."[147] The influence of powwows and sachems alike operated based on wampum beads revenues because it helped sustain their connection to the spiritual world and conferred to them ritualistic command. The message Waban declared did not counteract his Native beliefs regarding physical and spiritual sickness but offered an alternative connection to sacred healing through his Puritan faith. Rather than seeing Christianity as a means of completely erasing Native beliefs, in some instances it helped Puritanizing affiliates sustain their Indigenous identity and retain reciprocal balance with the world around them.

A minor sachem of Concord, who became increasingly fascinated by Waban's Nonantum project, similarly desired to transform his community into a Christianized town in hopes of sustaining his own diplomatic power and authority. When the Concord sachem spoke to his people, many of the "chiefe men" protested the new development in fear of abandoning their spiritual customs. Of course, the Puritan pastors demanded that Native rituals and beliefs be forgotten and repented of, so these decisions were difficult for many who were not convinced of Christianity as a solution to their problems. The Concord sachem gave a speech that was inspired by his meeting with Waban and other Nonantum leaders:

> All the time you have lived after the Indian fashion under the power and protection of higher Indian Sachems, what did they care for you? They onely fought their owne ends out of you, and therefore would exact upon you, and take

[146] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, 203.
[147] Christoph Strobel, *Native Americans of New England* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2020), 57.

> away your skins and your Kettles & your Wampam from you at their own pleasure.[148]

The redistribution system of gift exchanges was a process of sustaining power for those great sachems who effectively exerted their political influence over other leaders and maintained a supply of both goods and services that inherently bestowed spiritual power.[149] Wampum beads and copper objects played important roles within Native trade and economic systems prior to European arrival,[150] but Algonquians perceived these objects to be saturated with sacred qualities that leaders acquired to display and stabilize their authority.[151] Waban and the Concord sachem embraced the opportunity to affirm their leadership authority in ways that coincided with their acquisition of sacred items, providing them with further opportunities in acquiring sacred power and balance.

Indigenous and English Resistance to Waban's Spiritual Initiatives

Not every Algonquian sachem found Christianity convincingly powerful or helpful for Indigenous causes, and Puritans pushed against Native actions when they challenged missionization efforts. In 1647, a sachem the English pastors called John, who had a "strong and furious spirit," told the Puritans that he would willingly gather his people to hear their message, but when the day arrived, no preparations had been made. "Yet that very morning when they were to bee present," says Shepard, "he sends out almost all his men to Sea, pretending fishing, and therefore although he came late himself to the Sermon, yet his men were absent."[152] Sachems with powerful connections to the sacred world and successful means of restoring balance in their communities often found little to no need for the English religion. While many

[148] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 114.
[149] Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians*, 9.
[150] Howard Russell, *Indian New England Before the Mayflower* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1980), 185-186.
[151] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, 202; 223.
[152] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 118.

historians have viewed narratives like this one as acts of resistance, it is necessary to emphasize that these leaders were not resisting English Christianity as much as they were preserving their own spiritual power and balance. In fact, introducing a competing, potent source of spiritual power could cause sacred imbalances within Dawnland communities. Appeasing the Massachusett Bay Colony through diplomatic agreements and religious dialogue was important for maintaining peace. For powerful sachems, though, subjecting their Algonquian peoples to English *manitou* could cause sacred instability and the breakdown of their communities. In other cases, the Puritan ministers encountered Massachusett sachems who were unwilling to consider Christianity because it would upset their tributary system and flow of spiritually powerful goods and objects. Eliot noted in 1650 that "all the Sachems sensible of, and therefore set themselves against praying to God; and then I was troubled."[153] These Indigenous leaders were unwilling to talk further with Puritans because of the impact of the praying towns on the great Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin and his tributary system. Cutshamekin, discussing with Eliot his growing concerns with the missions, noted that "the Indians that pray to God, since they have so done, do not pay him tribute as formerly they have done."[154] The gift-giving services through tributary status allowed the great sachem to support food and goods for his people, provide gifts to win over new allies, and sustain spiritual power for himself. Cutshamekin risked losing additional diplomatic support and spiritual power as subordinate Indigenous leaders joined the praying towns. Minor Christian sachems, moreover, advanced their sacred power by establishing new relationships and exercising their control over wampum beads, the Puritan religious documents, and prayers within the newly established praying towns.

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[153] Henry Whitfield and John Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 203.
[154] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," 203.

Eliot himself was not unwilling to criticize Waban when his actions conflicted with Puritan rules and practices. In the fall of 1647, Waban had two guests in his wigwam on the "Lords day" and sent two of his servants to hunt down a "Rackoone" in a nearby tree. The Puritan minister disapprovingly highlights how "Waban being willing to be so well provided to entertain those strangers" saw no problem with his "violation of the Sabbath." Some forms of provision for guests may have been tolerated on the Puritan day of rest from all forms of work and leisure, but Eliot interpreted this act as a form of entertainment rather than an act of necessity. Although Eliot does not give many details concerning his rebuke of Waban on "the next Lecture day," the account clearly suggests that Waban, even as a Native leader, was not entirely immune to criticisms.[155] At the same time, how did Waban view this event? As an Algonquian sachem, his social obligations to provide food and supplies for his community and other visitors was based on the ethos of reciprocity.[156] Taking care of his guests was one of many ways Waban could express his quality of character and influence as a Nipmuck leader, even if it was on a Puritan holy day. With the decision between following a seemingly arbitrary English law or fulfilling his duty as a sachem, Waban chose his Indigenous responsibility. Becoming a praying town leader certainly meant conforming to Puritan norms from the clergy's perspective, but Waban took the liberty, with the expectation of potential rebuke from Eliot, to act as a responsible Nipmuck. Furthermore, Christianizing Native leaders learned to walk in both Indigenous and English worlds, accommodating multiple pathways in their desire to consolidate new sources of spiritual power. Not all sachems in the region perceived the English as enthusiastically as Waban, and Puritan ministers were not always satisfied with his disregard for their instructions. Yet his unwillingness to waver from Indigenous habits and socio-political

[155] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 126.
[156] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, 131-132.

practices in the praying town context gained Waban increasing support and loyalty from other Native communities.

Praying Town of Natick and its Tributary Loyalty to Waban

The extensive Native Christian network Waban helped construct promoted his diplomatic skills and control of Christian spiritual sources within times of crisis and instability, which gained him increased backing from his people. A sachem was nothing without this support. One marker of success for an Algonquian sachem was the type of socio-political support they received from their community and allying leaders with whom they associated. Michael Oberg states that Native leaders were incapable of ruling without the consent of their people because their social, religious, and political power came through a network of loyalty and responsibilities that "always balanced the powers of the sachem."[157] Waban managed to establish strong ties with both Native and English leaders in Dawnland in the late 1640s through political and sacred obligations. Although some Puritan ministers critiqued Waban as not conforming enough to their socio-religious standards, his actions, while at times antagonistic to Christian norms, certainly won him favor with other Indigenous peoples as a formidable and resilient sachem.

Waban's rise to power was associated with the spiritual integration of Anglo-Christianity into his Algonquian worldview, and the accommodation of Puritan beliefs and practices in bringing balance to the sacred disruptions. In the 1650s, John Eliot, the elders of his Roxbury church, and other English missionaries observed, listened, and analyzed Native Christian pronouncements of their new Puritan faith. From the English perspective, this was the next step in confirming the faith of these Indigenous leaders and establishing a Christian church at Natick. If the Puritan faith was going to continue among the Nipmuck, Massachusett, and Wampanoag

[157] Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 22-23.

peoples, an officially recognized church community must be established. As Jean M. O'Brien argues, Christian affiliates, from their Indigenous perspective, utilized these Puritan methods as a "strategy to maintain particular lands of overriding cultural importance."[158] Likewise, prayer – the act of communing with other-than-human beings – in the Native confessions represents Puritan beliefs that similarly extended to previous Indigenous practices, perpetuating Native agency in defining their persistent religious identity.[159] Dawnland leaders sought to retain their lands and preserve their communal identities through the English legal systems and faith, even when it meant the unraveling of some traditional practices and beliefs.

Waban particularly voiced his Native Christian identity in his confessions before the Roxbury elders in 1652. "I desire that I may be converted from all my sins, and that I might beleeve in Christ," says the Nipmuck sachem, "and I desire him." Even though he openly admitted "I am a sinner," Waban's confession of sin and the Puritan faith was not as eloquent or convicting as the observers desired. Eliot noted to the elders that Waban's "gift lay in Ruling, Judging of Cases, wherein he is patient, constant and prudent, insomuch that he is much respected among them." In other words, his power and influence emanated from his authority as a Native sachem rather than a Puritan teacher, as other Native Christian leaders usually taught at the praying towns. The Puritan minister also reminded the elders that Waban was a "great drawer on to Religion," which emphasizes not only his position as a praying town leader but also his prominence and prestige in southern Dawnland.[160]

Other Native confessors likewise professed a similar pattern of pre-Christian life in sin, lawlessness, and evil, and then proclaimed their new life in the Puritan religion, yet many also

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[158] Jean M. O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 59.
[159] Linford D. Fisher, "Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640-1730," *Harvard Theological Review* 102, No. 1 (Jan., 2009): 108-110.
[160] Eliot and Mayhew, "Tears of Repentance," 271-272.

attributed their new faith to the guidance and labor of Waban. The first meeting in 1652 was not very successful, but it did reveal the progress that Eliot, Shepard, and others were making among the local Native communities. Despite their failure in convincing the Roxbury elders of their Puritan faith, the Native confessors reflected a genuine sense of loyalty to their leader Waban. "When Waban spake to me that I should pray to God," says Nataous, "I did so."[161] Most of the confessions either reference Waban as the reason for their spiritual inquiry into Christianity, or no Native figure at all. Some noted that they heard the English pastors speak to them. Others frequently spoke of the Puritan *manitou's* impact on their life despite their former lifestyles of sin, shamanism, and wickedness. One Native confessor, Ponampam, admitted that he did not pray at first because "the Sachems would be angry, because They did not say, pray to God, and therefore I did not yet pray."[162] Fear gripped certain Native Christian affiliates because of the opposition their communities received from sachems who discouraged interacting with a foreign, potent spiritual power. In this case, Ponampam was not dissuaded by his leaders but found the message of the Puritan *manitou* interesting and compelling. Towards the end of the session, two other Natives spoke in thankfulness of Waban's influence and persuasion. Antony declared that "Waban and my two brothers prayed to God," and, with the death of one of the brothers, he believed God was angry with him and confessed his sin. Owussumag also confessed, "When I first heard that Waban prayed to God, and after that many more prayed," yet with skepticism and reluctance he eventually "remembred my sins" and prayed.[163] The 1652 meeting ended with the Puritan elders having hesitations towards establishing a church in Natick, and the second meeting in 1654 did not prove to be overtly fruitful for the Native congregation either. The Roxbury

[161] Eliot and Mayhew, "Tears of Repentance," 272.
[162] *Ibid*., 281.
[163] *Ibid*., 292-293.

elders were a difficult group to convince of Indigenous faith and civility, which was not out of the ordinary for Puritan leaders at the time. Some English leaders seriously doubted the conversion of Native Americans and the civilizing process that Eliot pushed for, and this form of cynicism continued up to Metacom's War in 1675. As the confessors continued to conform towards English standards of lifestyle and belief, they also continued to recognize their leaders, like the Nipmuck sachem Waban, in a traditional sense as their protectors and spiritual guides.

The third meeting's confessions continued to support Waban as a forerunner of the Native community's faith in 1659, and it concluded with the Roxbury elders blessing the construction of the Natick Native church. As in the former meetings, Algonquian affiliates like Antony professed their loyalty to Waban and explained how his authority in prayer convinced them to engage in the Puritan religion.[164] Waban's success in controlling sacred power and connecting to the Puritan *manitou* earned him the respect and influence of other Dawnland inhabitants. Monotunkquanit, a Nipmuck Native, was encouraged by Waban to practice Puritan prayers and follow God, and "then I promised Waban, that when hee came again I would pray to God."[165] Wutásakómpauin attributed his acceptance of the Puritan faith to the actions of Waban, too, in that "at first Waban perswaded me to pray, and taught us."[166] The Nipmuck sachem increased his role in the Dawnland political order through deeply connected access to the English *manitou*, and it is clear that he was well-respected by these Natives even prior to their full adoption of Christianity. They willingly listened to him and at times disagreed with the new source of sacred power that he represented, but ultimately submitted to his teaching and authority.

[164] Eliot, "A Further Account of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," 365.
[165] *Ibid*., 372 and 391.
[166] *Ibid*., 373 and 389.

Considering the impact of disease, warfare, and colonization, Native affiliates were certainly limited in their options. John Speen references Waban in his own story and his frustrations in how the "English took much ground, and I thought if I prayed, the English would not take away my ground." The hope for these Natives in establishing praying towns like Natick under English rule was to curtail the aggressive land-grabbing activity by the new settlers. Waban, as his sachem role demanded, protected the Indigenous community's interests in both land and health in relation to political power and the sacred world. Speen admits that the powwows had no command over the sicknesses within their settlements, and many people "die though they Pauwau."[167] Under the Puritan *manitou*, however, Waban and other Christian Natives found new spiritual healing to deal with the unrelenting disruptions of their world. A Native affiliate Piumbuhhou trusted his powwows initially and "believed not Waban" nor his power in prayer to a new *manitou*, but then he lost his family to disease. "Then my wife and children died: then my afflicted poore heart came in, and the Minister came to me and said, pray to God, because God afflicteth and tryeth you." The anguished Algonquian understood that an other-than-human being brought sacred disruptions into his life and was angry at him, and his only means of reconciliation, as he interpreted it, was to "pray to God, from henceforth, as long as I live."[168] Waban's role as a sachem was pivotal in assisting Native peoples with a new method in dealing with the breakdown of their spiritual world. As the confessions reveal, many of the Native Puritans attributed their trust in the English *manitou* to the teachings and practice of Waban. Through his leadership, Natick became a Christianized Native church and a tangible solution to the sacred disruptions in southern Dawnland for those who followed his spiritual path.

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[167] Eliot, "A Further Account of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," 387.
[168] *Ibid*., 392.

Summary

From a minor Nipmuck sachem to a praying town elder, Waban's success resided in his masterful capability to walk, live, and think between both the Nipmuck and Puritan worlds. The early association of his name and the spirit of God in Eliot's Ezekiel sermon gave him a spiritual connection to the English *manitou*. As southern Dawnland continued to experience spiritual disruptions, Waban effectively accommodated the Puritan faith as a means of sustaining his sachemship, restoring health to his community and followers, and bringing balance to the sacred world. Other Algonquian sachems chose different paths, while some embraced Waban's vision in participating in the English religion. The repetition of the Nipmuck sachem as the forerunner of the Christian Native faith at Natick had cultural implications regarding Native political ideology and tributary fidelity. Those who followed him felt indebted and loyal to his sachemship. Even as he Christianized in the early years of the missions, Waban in many respects remained loyal to his Indigenous community and Nipmuck identity. Moreover, he successfully integrated Puritan Christian beliefs and polity within his Indigenous context to fortify his sachemship influence and gaining new diplomatic and spiritual power. As the praying towns continued, Waban remained a central figure in the leadership of the Puritan missions. Fittingly, Daniel Gookin praises him as "the chief" of the principal rulers of Natick, and, in comparing him to other Christian Native leaders, he says: "I do not know any Indian that excels him."[169]

[169] Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, 44.

Chapter IV

CUTSHAMEKIN

As John Eliot's missions expanded in 1650, southern Dawnland sachems grew frustrated and bitter. "This businesse of praying to God (for that is their general name of Religion) hath hitherto found opposition only from the Pawwawes and profane spirits," according to Eliot, "but now the Lord hath exercised us with another and a greater opposition; for the Sachems of the Country are generally set against us." Initially, the small Algonquian communities accommodating the Puritan faith did not heavily disrupt the socio-political organization of Dawnland societies. In 1650, however, the Christianization of Native communities began interrupting the tributary systems of their leading great sachem. As Puritanizing sachems embraced the new way of life set before them, they slowly drifted from loyal subservience and gift-giving to their great sachems. "They plainly see that Religion will make a great change among them, and cut them off from their former tyranny; for they used to hold their people in an absolute servitude." Eliot believed that powerful leaders took advantage of other minor sachems by forcibly taking their material goods and wealth for themselves. "Besides their former manner was, that if they wanted money, […] they would take occasion to rage and be in a great anger," so minor leaders willingly gave the enraged leader anything they desired to pacify them. The Puritan ministers interpreted the tributary system as a despotic, coercive structure of greed maintained through perpetual manipulation. Many of the Christianizing sachems rebuked their leader for "his sinne" and were "willing to pay, but not as formerly." Through their unwillingness to give consistent tribute as they did prior to the English missionizing, minor

leaders shifted their loyalties, and Puritan leaders had to deal with backlash from their great Massachusett sachem ally, Cutshamekin.[170]

This account of Cutshamekin's troublesome encounter with the Puritan ministers of Massachusett Bay colony is one of many. Throughout the missionary tracts, the great sachem continuously finds himself in conflict with both Christian Native leaders and Puritan ministers alike who expected him to obediently convert to and promote the Christian faith. Some historians such as Neal Salisbury and Francis Jennings present Cutshamekin as a tragic hero who failed to understand English imperialism and, therefore, succumbed to Puritan political and economic pressures.[171] In their view, the great sachem's desperate attempts at resisting English encroachment eventually forced him to accept the praying town method and the Christian faith.

However, a full scope view of the *The Eliot Tracts* presents an alternative perspective of the Massachusett sachem. Cutshamekin befriended the Bay colony leaders in the 1630s in hopes of protecting his community against Native threats and promoting his diplomatic skills. By 1646, the ministers propagated their Christian religion among the Massachusett peoples in pursuit of assimilating Native Americans into their English society. From 1646 to 1654, Cutshamekin asserted his own Indigenous authority and power against the missionaries in ways that disputed the spiritual supremacy of the Puritan religion. While the English peoples had access to sacred power, Indigenous leaders still sought to promote their own spiritual control over and against the new settlers. This chapter will explore how Cutshamekin aggrandized his spiritual power through crafting diplomatic bonds with neighboring peoples, challenging Puritan religious influence in

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[170] Henry Whitfield and John Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 202-203.

[171] Neal Salisbury, "Conquest of the 'Savage': Puritans, Puritan Missionaries, and Indians, 1620-1680," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1972), 204-205; and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and The Cant of Conquest* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 243-248.

the missions, and preserving his Indigenous connection to the sacred world. Although the great Massachusett sachem did experience a decline in his tributary support, this was caused by subversive tactics from Christianizing Native leaders who were seeking to establish their own diplomatic and spiritual power in the new Puritan context.

Cutshamekin's Rise to Power During Outbreaks of Sacred Disruptions

As sacred disruptions took their toll on the Indigenous population, some Dawnland leaders successfully overcame the social, political, and spiritual breakdown through diplomatic skill and sacred power, such as the Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin. As English colonies settled on the southeastern coastline, epidemics invaded Native communities indiscriminately and left their social orders in disarray. Paul Kelton estimates that Native individuals affected by colonial smallpox had "a 40 percent chance of dying from the disease or an even greater chance if their health had been compromised by malnourishment or simultaneous occurrence of multiple disease."[172] As droughts, hurricanes, and the destruction of food supplies occurred alongside European colonization in the 1630s, smallpox episodes took a massive toll of shock and death on Massachusett peoples. Disease also had a significant personal impact on Cutshamekin, as both of his sachem brothers, Chickatawbut and Obtakiest, died in the 1633-34 smallpox epidemic, and the deaths of his other relatives and close friends were also very likely. Like other Algonquians, Cutshamekin likely interpreted the epidemics as sacred disruptions and reciprocal breakdown between his communities and other-than-human beings.

The most important and influential leaders in Native societies were the sachems like Cutshamekin who sought to preserve the political and spiritual stability of the community. Mark Meuwese states that the head office in Native polity was the sachem whose main purpose was to

[172] Paul Kelton, *Cherokee Medicine, Colonial Germs: An Indigenous Nation's Fight against Smallpox, 1518-1824* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2015), 12.

ensure the "preservation and management of the territory they and their followers claimed."[173] In replacing his brother as a Massachusett sachem, a variety of responsibilities, such as diplomacy, trade, and warfare, fell under Cutshamekin's role in protecting his people and their land. The influence of a sachem depended upon their access to spiritual power and their ability to exhibit that power in every function of their role. Although powwows were unable to ritually halt the continual waves of sacred disruptions, Massachusett peoples continued relying on their sachem to restore stability with the sacred world. As Kathleen Bragdon suggests, for Native leaders like Cutshamekin, the "importance of spiritual well-being is also closely tied to the political, symbolic, and ritual importance of the sachem in southern New England."[174] Trained from a young age to access the spiritual world, Cutshamekin, like other Algonquian leaders, desperately sought new ways of establishing peace and order through sacred power.

As a great sachem, Cutshamekin desired to maintain his authority and qualifications as a leader through promoting his spiritual power in diplomacy and warfare, and new opportunities to stabilize his community and sachemship developed through the Pequot War. Cutshamekin sided with the English to fight against the Pequots, their long-standing rivals, and successfully exerted dominance over his enemies. John Winthrop says in his journal that Cutshamekin "being armed with a corslet and a piece had crept into a swamp and killed a Pequot, and having flayed off the skin of his head, he sent it to Canonicus, who presently sent it to all the sachems about him and returned many thanks to the English, and sent 4 fathom of wampum to Cutshamekin."[175] His appeals to the Narragansett sachems on behalf of the Bay colony led to successful negotiations

[173] Mark Meuwese, "The Dutch Connection: New Netherland, the Pequots, and the Puritans in Southern New England, 1620-1638," *Early American Studies* 9, No. 2 (2011): 298.
[174] Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (University of Oklahoma Press 1996), 154.
[175] John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, edited by Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, Abridged Edition (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 101-102.

that reflected his power as a persuasive sachem to unite foreign and unfriendly peoples.[176] Moreover, the success of his mission as a warrior and his dominance over the Pequot enemy in the swamp – a location sacred to Algonquian peoples as a place of potent spiritual energy and gateway points for consulting other-than-human being guardians[177] – reflected his ability to manipulate powerful sources of sacred power. Dawnland peoples often consulted the sacred world through powwow ceremonies to predict the outcomes of future battles and controlling natural forces, such as the weather, to their advantage in warfare. Cutshamekin's achievements in the Pequot swamp not only showcased his strength over rivaling Natives but also his spiritual strength over other-worldly powers.

In the Pequot War, the battle of Fort Mystic and the destruction of the Pequot community was certainly considered a victory for and by the English military. How did Dawnland peoples, on the other hand, view the English in the war's aftermath? Referencing a Native who assisted the English as a scout, Wequash articulated the differing perspectives Algonquians held towards the English:

> Before that time he had low apprehensions of our God, having conceived him to be (as he said) but a Musketto God, or a God like unto a flye; and as meane thoughts of the English that served this God, that they were silly weake men; yet from that time he was convinced and perswaded that our God was a most dreadfull God; and that one English man by the help of this God was able to slay and put to flight an hundred Indians.[178]

Because of English stamina in overcoming both epidemics and enemies in warfare, Algonquian warriors interpreted the might of the settlers as a spiritual authority connected to sources of sacred power. William Simmons remarks that some Pequot warriors initially threatened English

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[176] Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 34.
[177] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, *1500-1650*, 192; Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 32.
[178] Anonymous, "New Englands First Fruits," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 61.

soldiers in relation to their weak God, then as the war turned against them, refused to fight, fearing their English God and sacred power.[179] By the end of the Pequot war in 1638, Puritan settlers were deemed a people associated with potent *manitou* and sacred power. Cutshamekin undoubtedly reached similar conclusions, as he chose to ally with the English leaders to defeat the Pequots and hunt down surviving refugees.

As an older man, successful warrior, and established leader, Cutshamekin was partially skeptical of English religious power. By the end of the 1630s and early 1640s, Cutshamekin was a great sachem of formidable potency; however, while Dawnland sachems worked alongside English leaders to expand commerce, trade, and diplomatic peace, it was still unclear who held the stronger and more sustainable access to *manitou*. The Massachusett sachem already exerted significant power over subordinate tribes and the sacred world. In contrast, Waban, a minor Nipmuck sachem, struggled to sustain his small community during the environmental collapses of the 1630s and submitted to Cutshamekin's tributary authority. Subjected leaders were coerced to supply the great Massachusett sachem with wampum beads, copper, and other objects of a mystical nature. Naturally, the gift-giving services provided Cutshamekin with constant goods conferred with political and spiritual power that he could redistribute to his elite constituents.

The peace pact with the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1644 exemplified Cutshamekin's ability to diplomatically negotiate the Massachusett peoples and their place in their traditional lands with the encroaching, formidable European settlers. With stressors from Mohegan enemies, like the sachem Uncas to the west, Cutshamekin sought to remedy tensions with the English settlers on his eastern border for more long-lasting peace. To assure this, the Massachusett

[179] William S. Simmons, "Conversion from Indian to Puritan," in *New England Encounters: Indians and Euroamericans, 1600-1850*, edited by Alden T. Vaughan (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 184-185.

sachem sold the tribe's seaside land to the English colony, which frustrated some of his subordinate leaders, like Waban, who relied on coastal resources.[180] Though Cutshamekin submitted himself to English diplomacy to obtain political stability, the sachem showed no interest in accommodating English religion. The *manitou* of the settlers was unquestionably a dominant force to be reckoned with in Dawnland, but Cutshamekin sought to preserve his own spiritual vigor. At the same time, the English magistrates desired the spiritual subjugation of their Indigenous neighbors and interpreted Native religion, in accordance with their worldview, as demonic witchcraft.

Contested *Manitou* and the Great Sachem's Challenge Against the Puritans

The start of the Puritan missions in 1646 did not unfold as John Eliot desired. *The Day Breaking* tract reports that Cutshamekin's people of Dorchester Mill were less interested in the message of sin and repentance than they were in the English story of creation and the natural world. As Eliot suggests to his readers, this hyper-focus on the creation narrative was not what the ministers originally intended to discuss, but many Algonquians resonated deeply with the stories in relation to their own perspectives. In speaking to Waban's Nipmuck community, "whereupon several of them propounded presently several questions, (far different from what some other Indians under Kitshomakin […] about six weekes before had done, viz 1. What was the cause of Thunder. 2. Of the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea. 3. Of the Wind) but the questions (which wee thinke some speciall wisedom of God directed these unto) (which these propounded) were in number six."[181] The Nipmuck sachem's community did not respond to the Puritans in the

[180] Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646-1730," *New England Quarterly* 63, No. 3 (Sep., 1990): 402.
[181] Thomas Shepard, "The Day-Breaking, If Not The Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 84.

same manner as those in Dorchester Mill, creating two contrasting narratives of Indigenous acceptance and rejection of the Puritan religion in the missionary tracts.

Such inquiries about thunder, movements of the sea, and wind undoubtedly confused the English pastors who attributed these works of nature to acts of God and his creational design. In later meetings, other Indigenous examiners asked similar questions that Thomas Shepard dismissed as irrelevant and vain. "There were many more questions of this kind," says Shepard, "as also many Philosophicall about the Sunne, Moon, Stars, Earth and Seas, Thunder, Lightning, Earthquakes, &c. which I forbear to make mention of, lest I should clog your time with reading."[182] It is clear the Puritan pastors did not understand the Native logic for these kinds of questions and how they truly related to their discussion on the Christian religion. The missionary tracts do not give details on how Eliot responds, only that they found the topic troublesome to his labors.

The descriptions of the natural world that Cutshamekin and the Massachusett peoples described to the Puritans primarily depicted *manitou* and sources of spiritual power. As previously defined, term *manitou* refers to "someone and/or something (depending on one's worldview) that was imbued with power," which often had deep sacred, spiritual, and mystical connotations.[183] In one sense, both humans and human-made objects could be a *manitou*; a person could be exceptionally proficient in a role, or an object could be capable of conferring influence on the skillful user. Most of the Puritan ministers interpreted the Algonquian as a reference to their Christian God because they associated *manitou* only with other-than-human

[182] Thomas Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel Breaking Forth Upon the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 122.
[183] Evan Haefeli, "On First Contact and Apotheosis: Manitou and Men in North America," *Ethnohistory* 54, No. 3 (Summer 2007): 42. For a wider etymological evaluation of the word *manitou*, see Clinton N. Westman and Tara L. Joly, "Visions of the great mystery: Grounding the Algonquian *manitow* concept," *Social Compass* 64, No. 3 (2017): 360-375.

beings, not people or objects, which was only a partial understanding of the Algonquian perspective.[184] Some of their resulting dialogue on the topic was successful, but in many cases the English observers misunderstood Native worldview and beliefs.

Indigenous cosmology centered on ethical relationships between human beings and other-than-human beings that conferred sacred power. The spiritual questions of Cutshamekin and his people focused on discussing thunder, wind, and the sea because they represented the three-world order: the world-above, the human world, and the world-below.[185] Within these systems lived many kinds of beings that orchestrated the balance and harmony of the natural world and the humans who lived in it. Howard Russell says, "The principle was live and let live, for the Indian felt himself in the presence of living entities who were as conscious of his existence as he of theirs."[186] Northeastern Algonquians used ceremony as a means of living in balance with their world. Sachems performed diplomatic ceremonies to control socio-political obligations, peace, or domination over other peoples, which showcased their ability to manage sacred objects and sources of power. Cutshamekin mentioned these sources of sacred power in his talks with Eliot. Wind was a reference to the Four Directions, or Four Winds, who were spiritual persons that orchestrated order and balance in the world.[187] The Thunderbird called *Kiehtan*, the Southwest

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[184] Thomas Mayhew states that Dawnland Natives have a "notion of a god greater than all, which they call Mannit," John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Jr., "Tears of Repentance: Or, A Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark, (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 254. Roger Williams also believes that "Manìt" means "God or Spirit," Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, edited by Dawn Dove, Sandra Robinson, Lorén Spears, Dorothy Herman Papp, and Kathleen J. Bragdon (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2019), 108.
[185] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, *1500-1650,* 184-190.
[186] Howard S. Russell, *Indian New England Before the Mayflower* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1980), 44.
[187] Christopher Carr, "Persons of the Directions: Ontology and Ethics Meet Cosmology in Understanding the World Views and Rituals of Adena, Hopewell, and Post-Contact Eastern Woodland Indian societies," in *Landscapes of Ritual Performance in Eastern North America*, edited by Cheryl Claassen, Vol. 8 (Oxbow Books, 2023), 101-124. Also see, Bretton T. Giles, Brian M. Rowe, Ryan M. Parish, and F. Kent Reilly, "Mound 2 at the Hopewell Site as Cosmoscape." in *Archaeologies of Cosmoscapes in the Americas*, edited by Bretton T. Giles, J. Grant Stauffer, and Shawn P. Lambert, Vol. 5 (Oxbow Books, 2022), 207-228.

wind who ruled the world-above, was a powerful sky being who was necessary for daily health and prosperity.[188] In the world-below, the Horned Serpent called *Cheepi*, the Northeast wind, was associated with both life and death, and powwows often sought this being's power during sacred disruptions.[189] These mystical beings governed the balance of the Algonquian world and, by necessity, were central to their worldview. Cutshamekin experienced the power of these beings throughout his lifetime by interacting with sacred spaces, objects, and other-than-human persons. The Massachusett sachem invoked his cosmology in direct opposition to the beliefs of the Puritan ministers.

Historians have interpreted Cutshamekin's intent and motives, although limited to his brief cosmological response, in differing ways. Diplomacy was the primary focal point of Cutshamekin's role as a sachem, so the discussion of cosmology functioned as a method of incorporating the English into Cutshamekin's world. Craig White asserts that "they [Cutshamekin's people] may have been urging Eliot to relate origin stories such as might have been exchanged if their guests had been visiting Indians."[190] Algonquians of Dawnland had a plethora of stories relating to the world-above and the world-below, the Thunderbird and the Horned Serpent. Many of these narratives were localized stories that shaped the community and were shaped by those who participated in ceremonial retellings. Most Native Americans had their own mythologies that involved the sacred world, mystical experiences with other-than-human beings, and communal identity in relation to other humans and their geographical

[188] Edward J. Lenik, "The Thunderbird Motif in Northeastern Indian Art," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 40 (January 1, 2012): 163.
[189] Alvin H. Morrison and David A. Ezzo, "Dawnland Dualism in Northeastern Regional Contact," *Papers of the Sixteenth Algonquian Conference* 16 (November 1, 1985): 140-141. Also see, David A. Ezzo, "Montagnais & Southern New England Religion," *Whispering Wind* 39, No. 3 (2010): 15.
[190] Craig White, "The Praying Indians' Speeches as Texts of Massachusett Oral Culture," *Early American Literature* 38, No. 3 (2003): 442.

environment.[191] But were the Massachusett peoples simply sharing creation myths with their English guests? As a point of reference, Thomas Mayhew states that Hiacoomes, a Christian Native leader from Martha's Vineyard, once told another local leader, Myoxeo, all things "concerning God the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost" who was one God, and Myoxeo "reckoned up about 37 principial gods he had." Myoxeo then asked, "Shall I (he said) throw away these 37 gods for one?"[192] Comparing Cutshamekin's response to Eliot with Myoxeo's rebuttal to Hiacoomes illuminates how Native leaders countered Christian conversion efforts through relaying alternative religious perspectives to those the Puritans presented. The nature of the Massachusett sachem's questioning, then, was not as charitable and friendly as White presents it. Christianity was not simply a new religion distinct from Native religion, as Europeans often perceived it, but, as Native Americans saw it, a new pathway to the spiritual world and an alternative and dangerous source of sacred power. Cutshamekin knew that Christianity was another route to powerful *manitou*, but, as Myoxeo wondered himself, was it superior to his own spiritual tradition?

Kristina Bross suggests that Eliot mentioned how Nontaum was different from Dorchester Mill not "because they had a different content but because they [Cutshamekin's people] did not signal a desire to enter into Christian dialogue."[193] Throughout *The Eliot Tracts*, Native Christians and interested observers asked many questions that the Puritan leaders were

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[191] By mythology, I do not mean "false" stories but rather sacred narratives of the community's origin. William Simmons suggests "myths" are a genre of folklore oral history that "are thought to be truthful accounts of what happened in the earliest possible time; they account for basic creation, are sacred, and provide the authority for existing social institutions, religious beliefs, and ritual," see William Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 6-7. Also see Donald Bahr, "Bad News: The Predicament of Native America Mythology," *Ethnohistory* 48, No. 4 (Fall 2001): 587-612. For Indigenous identity in association with environmental landscape, see Christine Delucia, "Terrapolitics in the Dawnland," *New England Quarterly* 92, No. 4 (Dec. 2019): 548-583.
[192] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," 178.
[193] Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 97.

eager to answer, some of them on creation. "Their fifth Question was, that if the water was higher then the earth, how comes it to passe that it doth not overflow all the earth?" Likewise, the ministers were willing to engage with Native questions about creation, but the context and approach of the men at Dorchester Mill communicated a negative intent that frustrated Puritan efforts. The missionary tracts emphasize this point by later comparing godless English men to Cutshamekin's community: "Wee told them [Nonantum Natives] that many English did not know God but were like to Kitchamakins drunken Indians."[194] Based on the context of *The Day Breaking* tract, Cutshamekin did not simply refuse to have a dialogue regarding the Christian faith but confidently challenged the authority of the English religion. As a Massachusett sachem, his career was empowered through embarking on Indigenous spiritual pathways and cultivating connections to mighty *manitou*. Marie Taylor correctly highlights that Cutshamekin employed his diplomatic abilities to discuss Native cosmologies, other-than-human beings, and political balance with the English. She argues that the sachem pressed Eliot to explain "the role that the colonists intend to play within the existing Indigenous system."[195] Although her assessment of Eliot's ignorance of Indigenous political dialogue is accurate, the missionary tract makes it clear that the Puritans did not misunderstand Cutshamekin's intent of challenging their Christian beliefs. The Massachusett sachem politically aligned himself with the people of the Bay colony, but that did not mean he assumed English spiritual power was superior to his own.

Surviving epidemics, droughts, warfare, and the burdensome threat of foreign peoples settling on his land, Cutshamekin promoted the superiority of his spiritual sources of power in opposition to the Puritan ministers. Like other Algonquian sachems, his questions to the Puritans

[194] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 89-90.
[195] Marie Taylor, "The Sachem and the Minister: Questions, Answers, and Genre Formation in the New England Missionary Project," *Early American Literature* 55, No. 1 (2020): 32-33.

were designed to bolster truths the sachem and his community had always trusted in times of need. The Puritans were correct in perceiving these questions as antagonistic from Cutshamekin and his people. Preserving his spiritual connections to the sacred world was not an option but a necessity for the great sachem who held his community together through his reciprocal relationship with *Cheepi*.

Challenges to Cutshamekin's Authority in the Puritan Missions

The Massachusett sachem's hegemony over southeastern Dawnland did not go unchallenged. Expansionist policies of the Bay Colony undoubtedly placed high pressures on Massachusett, Wampanoag, and Nipmuck peoples as they survived smallpox epidemics and other sacred breakdowns. Eliot's team of Puritan pastors attempted to evangelize their Algonquian neighbors with little success among Cutshamekin's people, but their struggles were not entirely in vain. The Nipmuck sachem Waban optimistically embraced the Puritan vision for a Christianizing Native community in late 1646, and he accommodated the English rituals into his view of the Puritan *manitou*. Due to their familiarity with the diseases, English ministers functioned similarly to Native powwows among these Christianizing groups in providing both physical remedies and spiritual methods of healing, such as Christian forms of prayer. Many smaller Indigenous communities, particularly those under the tributary authority of Cutshamekin, saw the Puritan *manitou* as an opportunity to increase their own power in a world out of balance. Meanwhile, the great sachem perceived the new spiritual pathway as dangerous and disruptive to the permanency of his leadership. Challenging the Puritan ministers granted Cutshamekin strength among his direct constituents, but allowing other Native leaders to engage in the Christian religion began loosening his regional clout. Between 1646 and 1651, the shaping of Christianizing Native communities by Dawnland leaders slowly unraveled Cutshamekin and his tributary control. Only after painful attempts at preserving his own spiritual traditions did the

great sachem willingly and gradually adhere to some Puritan religious reforms to retain his leadership. The Massachusett sachem experienced the steady decline of his political power more due to spiritual innovations and shrewd diplomacy by lesser Algonquian leaders than the inevitability of English imperialism.

Eliot and Shepard record many Indigenous conversions, questions, and lectures in the missionary tracts, but they also include accounts of correction. As the ministers were not always present in the Native communities, they relied on leading Native men to uphold Puritan laws, values, and beliefs in the community. When affiliates disregarded Puritan teachings or rules, Native leaders provided a report of the misdeeds to the ministers on their lecture days so the faulty individual could be brought to repentance. Christianizing Natives used the support of the Puritan pastors to keep in check individuals who were not completely supportive but interested in the religious affairs, thereby establishing their own power. Based on Christian values and ideals, all Algonquian peoples could be challenged in the praying towns regardless of their previous social or political status.

In the *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel* tract, a Native Christian teacher named Nabanton, "a sober good man, and a true friend to the English," daringly addressed Cutshamekin's wife as a profaner of the Sabbath during his lecture in 1647. Puritans were no less strict with Sabbath mandates in the Native communities than within their own towns and generally required fines for breaking those laws. Eliot states that "upon a Sabbath morning Cutchamaquin the sachem his wife going to fetch water met with other women, and she began to talk of worldly matters." Notably, the woman's name was less important to Eliot than that of her husband, the great Massachusett sachem who likewise passively honored Puritan religious mandates. Nabaton "reproved that which he heard of that morning" and publicly addressed the issue. Cutshamekin's wife skeptically retorted that it was not sinful and that Nabaton was in error for making it the

focus of the morning discourse. The Native leaders decided to withhold punishment until Eliot visited and offered his opinion "according to his holy Word," so the narrative ends assumingly in Nabaton's favor.[196] The Christian Algonquian teacher was very bold for accusing the great sachem's wife, and although the account does not detail Cutshamekin's reaction, undoubtedly brought the sachem a sense of embarrassment and frustration. The narrative displays new Indigenous challenges to customary authority and the slow shift of allegiances from Cutshamekin to Eliot and the Christian Native leaders of Nonantum. As a result, the great sachem was continually less interested in upholding Puritan authority than he was in promoting his own. The lack of willingness from the Massachusett peoples left Shepard saying, "I first began with the Indians of Noonanetum, as you know; those of Dorchester mill not regarding any such thing."[197]

Another incident recorded that same year was a perplexing act of drunkenness by Cutshamekin's son. During a catechism session, John Eliot noticed how the boy, who was "14. Or 15. yeers old," did not easily repeat the fifth commandment, and only said "Honor thy father" but nothing about his mother. In the following day, the report of his drunkenness was known by the town leaders who questioned him on the matter. Cutshamekin's son quickly acknowledged his actions and accused his father as an accomplice:

> He was called forth before the Assembly, and hee confessed that what was said against him was true, but hee fell to accuse his father of sundry evils, as that hee would have killed him in his anger, and forced hit to drink Sack, and I [Eliot] know not what else.

The Puritan leaders were incensed and very disheartened at the ordeal. The next lecture day, Eliot exhorted and condemned Cutshamekin for his many sins against his son. Prior to this public

[196] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 126.
[197] *Ibid*., 124.

meeting, the minister privately prepared Cutshamekin for his need of confession, but the great sachem was unquestionably not prepared for the Puritan's wrath. In hopes of undermining the stubborn and staunch sachem, Eliot openly gave a tirade against Cutshamekin: "I took occasion to put him upon confession of sundry over vices which I knew hee had in former times been guilty of […] Are you now sorry for your drunkennesse, filthiness, false dealing, lying, &c. which sinnes you commited before you knew God?" Left feeling vulnerable and certainly a sense of betrayal, the Massachusett sachem repented before all present. It took some encouragement from the ministers for his son to publicly forgive him, which ended with a solemn uniting of the family as "Cutshamaquin wept." While the entire event gave the Puritans hope of the sachem's embracing of the faith, they were still skeptical of the people at Dorchester Mill "that none of them should bee saved."[198]

Problems of alcohol and drunkenness in Native communities of Dawnland persisted well-beyond the 1640s, and Puritan ministers hastily preached against its consumption. Most of the English pastors who were concerned with Indigenous salvation believed that drunkenness obstructed conversion efforts because rational judgement was necessary for true conversion. Although not all Native peoples responded to alcohol in the same manner, many in eastern North America perceived it as a means of inducing a state of mind for spiritual experiences. Peter Mancall articulates that early Europeans often misunderstood how Natives viewed the benefits of alcohol and how it "helped some achieve highly valued dreamlike states of mind."[199] The association between European alcohol and ecstatic, mystical experiences was not a coincidence. For centuries prior to European colonization, eastern North American peoples used potent, bitter

[198] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 127-129.
[199] Peter Mancall, "'The Bewitching Tyranny of Custom': The Social Costs of Indian Drinking in Colonial America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 17, No. 2 (1993): 17.

herbs to make a beverage called Black Drink, which was important for social, medicinal, and ceremonial usage. R. Alfred Vicks argues that the use of the Black Drink can be traced as far back as the Woodland Period and, particularly in southeastern cultures, that it was developed as a ritual purging drink "as an additional method of attaining purity."[200] Balance was an important ethical concept for many Native American cultures, so ceremonial purification was necessary for holistically communicating with other-than-human persons. The Black Drink was a common practice in the colonial period, and alcohol was perceived as a similar agent of cleansing the body. As an otherworldly substance, alcohol, like other European objects of a mysterious nature, was a source of spiritual power to commune with sacred entities. Cherokee leaders in the colonial period, according to Izumi Ishii, benevolently accepted gifts of alcohol from Europeans because of its success in redistribution and usage in ceremonial contexts "helped headmen retain and solidify their power."[201]

In southern Dawnland, similar practices existed during the colonial period. Edward Winslow gives details of the vision quest ritual that young boys with great aptitude undertook so they could create a spiritual connection with the other-than-human being *Cheepi*. This process was necessary for becoming a sachem or a powwow that eager and earned these children great status among their peers. As Winslow records, it was a lengthy and strenuous affair:

> They train up the most forward and likeliest boys from their childhood in great hardness, and make them abstain from dainty meat, observing diverse orders prescribed, to the end that when they are of age the Devil [Hobbomock] may appear to them, causing to drink the juice of Sentry and other bitter herbs till they cast, which they must disgorge into the platter, and drink again, and again, till at length through extraordinary oppressing of nature it will seem to be all blood […] then they must go forth into the cold: also they beat their shins with sticks,

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[200] R. Alfred Vick, "The Black Drink throughout Cherokee History," in *Native Foodways: Indigenous North American Religious Traditions and Foods*, edited by Michelene E. Pesantubbee and Michael J. Zogry (Albany: SUNY Press, 2021), 170-182. Also see Tamara Shircliff Spike, "Sucking, Blood, and Fire: Timucuan Healing Practices in Spanish Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 94, No. 2 (Fall, 2015): 149-150.
[201] Izumi Ishii, *Bad Fruits of the Civilized Tree* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 14-16.

> and cause them to run through bushes, stumps, and brambles, to make them hardy and acceptable to the Devil, than in time he may appear unto them.[202]

The bitter and purging beverage described in Winslow's account is the Black Drink. The disorienting nature of the liquid prepared a child for their cold, solitude in the woods, where they were to encounter powerful other-than-human persons waiting for them. If they survived, the Algonquian child became a pniese, a warrior and adviser, to their sachems due to their skills of power and access to powerful manitou.[203]

The story of Cutshamekin forcing his young son into a drunken state harkens considerably to the vision quest ritual and Black Drink practices. Like the Cherokee leaders, the great Massachusett sachem adapted the English beverage to his own customs and worldview. The enigmatic drink was a product of spiritually potent English peoples and their dangerous *manitou* and, therefore, conferred spiritual power. Experimenting with alcohol was perhaps the best means to help his son experience the quest ritual and become a pniese through the traditional procedures of communing with *Cheepi*. A similar situation of drunkenness occurred in 1655 where three men "who are hemmed in by Relations" abducted the son of a Natick leader named Totherswamp, gave him alcohol until he was "very drunk," and left the child outside the entire night. The men were charged with "the sin of Drunkennesse, […] A willful making of the Child drunk, and exposing him to danger also."[204] Eliot's retelling of the event places all the blame on the three men and their anger at Totherswamp being a Christianizing Native leader. Totherswamp, though, publicly accused his son of collusion with the men: "he [the son] was

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[202] Kelly Wisecup, *"Good News from New England" by Edward Winslow: A Scholarly Edition* (Amherst: University of Massachusett Press, 2014), 107.
[203] R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 25-27.
[204] John Eliot, "A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 306.

guilty of sin, in that he feared not sin, and in that he did not believe his counsells […] to take heed of evill company; but he had believed Satan and sinners more then him [Totherswamp]."[205] Totherswamp, in his rejection of his former spiritual beliefs and practices, would no longer approve of vision quest rituals. This change, of course, disrupted the traditional means of establishing social, political, and sacred power in Dawnland societies. If other relatives saw the denial of their customs as a threat and enticed the boy to partake of the alcohol to encounter a powerful spiritual being, this circumstance would explain why Totherswamp blamed his son alongside the three men. His belief that the boy had listened to the voice of Satan, or *Cheepi*, in the incident also suggests that he perceived alcohol as an alternative to the Black Drink.

Cutshamekin was personally familiar with the effects of alcohol and ceremonially partook of the powerful substance with other Algonquian sachems. Eliot rebuked the great sachem in 1651 for drinking alcohol with "some bad Indians," though he tried to lighten the failure of the moment by stating he did not drink "unto drunkennesse." The scandalous act led Eliot and Cotton to withhold Cutshamekin from teaching in the praying towns for some time and encouraged his confession of sin so that "the Spirit of God might dwell in him." The ministers continued to be very skeptical of his motivations and lack of devotion to the Puritan faith and missions. Eliot notes that the participation of "the chiefe Sachem" in Nonantum was desired, but the English leaders were "doubtfull in respect of the throughnesse of his heart."[206]

The Preserving and Unfolding of Cutshamekin's Spiritual and Tributary Power

Cutshamekin's strategies of keeping diplomatic peace with the English and the preserving of his Indigenous spiritual power were at clear odds. His involvement in the

[205] Eliot, "A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel," 307.
[206] Henry Whitfield, "Strength out of Weaknesse, Or a Glorious Manifestation of the Further Progresse of the Gospel among the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 228.

leadership of the praying towns shows that he desired to not lose any Native support from his tributary system. As the great sachem, Cutshamekin was made the primary ruler of the praying town in Eliot's biblically-oriented hierarchical system, with other subsequent authorities underneath him. In many ways, Eliot's system was not so different from the Algonquian ranked society that previously existed, so, in hopes of encouraging the great sachem to adopt the Christian faith, this system momentarily continued his tributary rule. That changed, however, when minor sachems who shifted to the praying towns stopped paying their tribute to the great sachem. "But now if their Sachem so rage, and give sharp and cruell language, instead of seeking his favour with gifts (as formerly) they will admonish him of his sinne." Eliot encouraged his Christian Native subjects to resist the force of wicked rulers and to earn money from working hard as it is "Gods command."[207] As the praying town grew, Indigenous leaders and their communities relied less on the great sachem politically and began to support their new Christianizing community instead. Moreover, the Puritan missions created an alternative political allegiance that leaders like the Nipmuck sachem Waban used to advance their own influence and subvert Cutshamekin's tributary power. Cutshamekin's desire to balance the two competing, spiritually charged dynamics – the *Cheepi*-Satan and *Kiehtan*-Jehovah sources of power – ultimately led to irreconcilable tensions between the two. Through his choice to preserve his own connection to spiritual power, Cutshamekin's tributary rule was subverted by other minor Native leaders who accommodated Puritan *manitou* to expand their own sway over the community.

John Eliot was deeply concerned over how powerful sachems might respond to establishing an official praying town with a Christian Native church in 1650. Despite these pressures from non-Christian Native leaders, he progressed forward in his preparations to

[207] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," 202.

establish the first praying town of Natick in 1651. During a meeting with Native Christian leaders, Cutshamekin openly challenged Eliot and asserted his disapproval of the plans:

> This temptation hath much troubled Cutshamoquin our sachem, and he was raised in his spirit to such an height, that at a meeting after lecture, he openly contest with me against our proceeding to make a Town; and plainly told me that all the Sachems in the Countrey were against it, &c. When he did so carry himself, all the Indians were filled with fear, their countenances grew pale, and most of them slunk away […] I was alone, not any English man with me […] but to bold resolution, telling him it was Gods work I was about, and he [God] was with me, and I feared not him, nor all the Sachems in the country.[208]

This moment was a pivotal for the great Massachusett sachem. His career was driven and sustained through his access to powerful *manitou*, controlling of foreign peoples, and protection of his community. Cutshamekin's skillful persuasion garnered him victory throughout the previous decades of sacred disruptions. Yet now his work was simply falling apart, and he could no longer passively stand by. Why did a loss of tributary money and the establishment of an official praying town threaten his leadership so dramatically? In order to understand Cutshamekin's overwhelming fear of Eliot's missions, one must evaluate his coastal Algonquian context and worldview.

Dawnland tributaries were flexible systems of hierarchical leadership based on a distinct relationship between a sachem and their communities. Many of the peoples within these ranked political societies under their great sachems experienced their own degree of local autonomy and political authority. As Eric Johnson explains regarding coastal Algonquian tributaries, "Communities within a confederation could enjoy considerable autonomy while remaining united with the other communities."[209] Practically this structure meant that local leaders had the power to make decisions that benefitted themselves and their community, even if those actions

[208] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," 202-203.
[209] Eric Spencer Johnson, "'Some By Flatteries and Others By Threatening': Political Strategies Among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1993): 87.

differed from their great sachems. Of course, powerful leaders could use their skills and prestige to coerce minor leaders into subservient status, but generally sachems acted on the consent and will of their constituents. Tribal alliances functioned through gift-giving ceremonies that empowered the elite class who sought to advocate for and protect their people in the socio-political domain. Jenny Hale Pulsipher states that "Gift-giving, in addition to solidifying a sachem's power and prestige, helped demonstrate friendships, establish obligations, and renew alliances, playing a vital role in the social life and rituals of Indian societies throughout the northeast."[210] Cutshamekin's authority rested on his ability to protect his constituents, redistribute gifts as a means of maintaining alliances, and garner objects of sacred power. In comparison, the Powhatan chiefdom in the Chesapeake region – an Algonquian speaking group who first formed in the sixteenth century, also stratified into a rank society based on elites and commoners – used prestige goods and gift-giving tributes to empower the Indigenous leaders and institutionalize a chief's system of power.[211]

Although Dawnland peoples by the early seventeenth century had developed into societies with semi-permanent, charismatic sachems, they were still fairly egalitarian in contrast to chiefdom-like hierarchies due to their lack of a permanent priestly class and incontestable chiefs.[212] On the other hand, it is arguable that Cutshamekin's sachemship, established in 1633 after the death of his sachem brother, was akin to a petty chiefdom because of his long-term

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[210] Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 12.
[211] Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner, "On the Fringe of the Southeast: The Powhatan Paramount Chiefdom in Virginia," in *The Forgotten Centuries: Indians and Europeans in the American South, 1521-1704*, edited by Charles Hudson & Carmen Chaves Tesser (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 355-372; and Dylan Ruediger, "'Neither Utterly to Reject Them, Nor Yet to Drawe Them to Come In': Tributary Subordination and Settler Colonialism in Virginia," *Early American Studies* 18, No. 1 (Jan., 2020): 1-31.
[212] E. Randolph Turner, "Socio-political Organization within the Powhatan Chiefdom and the Effects of European Contact, A.D. 1607-1646," in *Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions in Eastern North America, A.D. 1000-1800*, edited by W. W. Fitzhugh (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 194-196.

power over Massachusett and Nipmuck peoples. Certainly, his role in the praying town as a primary ruler was due to his undeniable power and authority in Dawnland politics, but it was not uncontestable. The great sachem was losing gift-giving power due to a shrinking tribute supply, which impacted both his diplomatic abilities and spiritual power over Native subordinates.

The gift-giving tribute included different kinds of foods and services, but one of the most important items in the early seventeenth century was wampum beads. White and black-purple shell beads known as wampum were popularly used for diplomatic and economic purposes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by many eastern Woodland peoples: Iroquoian-speakers like the Cherokee, the Susquehannock, the Huron, and the Haudenosaunee; Algonquian-speakers like the Powhatan chiefdom and the Dawnland societies.[213] Many of these material objects were vital to the strength and influence of the Native leaders due to their intrinsic value within regional economies and because of the spiritual power these objects conferred. Neal Salisbury explains that certain material goods in Dawnland cultures, like copper, brass, and beads, bestowed unique power, which shows why a sachem's "access to manitou was obtained above all through reciprocal exchanges."[214] These exchanges related both to the commoners that a sachem displayed power over and to the other-than-human beings to whom the objects connected a sachem. Lynn Ceci argues that wampum beads symbolically connect to the Algonquian cosmology as sacred objects with cultural values: female (white) and male (black-purple); world-above (white) and world-below (black-purple). As the Thunderbird and the Horned Serpent were viewed with distinct characteristics and power, the wampum beads, too,

[213] Marshall Joseph Becker, "Small Wampum Bands Used By Native Americans in the Northeast: Functions and Recycling," *Material Culture* 40, No. 1 (Apr., 2008): 1-17. Also see, Marshall Joseph Becker, "Wampum Bags and Containers from the Northeast," *Material Culture* 45, No. 1 (Apr., 2013): 21-48.
[214] Neal Salisbury, "Religious Encounters in a Colonial Context: New England and New France in the Seventeenth Century*," American Indian Quarterly* 16, No. 4 (Autumn, 1992): 502.

were imbued with their otherworldly powers in ceremonial and ritual practice.[215] David H. Dye calls this exchange "the ritual economy" as Native American leaders controlled sacred knowledge and power "by limiting access to motifs, objects, rituals, sacra, and symbols that materialize the cosmological world and the heterarchical nature of conflict by establishing, conveying, and managing the meaning and value of alienable and inalienable goods."[216] Algonquian sachems coveted wampum beads and mystical objects as they asserted their power over both the socio-political domain of the Dawnland and the intertwining sacred world around them. Without these gifts from the tributary system, their influence and clout would decline.

Creating a fixed, institutionalized praying town, eventually with a Christian Native church, caused a crisis for the Massachusett sachem. His fear of further losing wampum bead tribute was a threat to both his diplomatic and spiritual power as a sachem. John Eliot rejected the sachem's plea to halt the establishing of Natick. Cutshamekin, agonized by the minister's words, backed down in submission. Eliot says that "Cutshamoquin went a little way with me, and told me that the reason of this trouble was because the Indians that pray to God, since they have so done, do not pay him tribute as formerly they have done." In Puritan style, the minister explained to the great sachem that Christians are to "Give unto Caesar what is Caesars, and unto God what is Gods," but the rebuke undoubtedly did little to resolve the sachem's griefs about his fracturing tributary system.[217] In fact, Eliot's view of the tributary system mistakenly understood the gift-giving transaction to be merely a type of economic taxation, causing him to overlook

[215] Lynn Ceci, "The Value of Wampum among the New York Iroquois: A Case Study in Artifact Analysis," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): 99-100. Also see, James W. Bradley, "Re-Visiting Wampum and Other Seventeenth-Century Shell Games," *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 39 (Jan., 2011): 25-51.
[216] David H. Dye, "Culture Heroes, Inalienable Goods, and Religious Sodalities: Long-Distance Exchange in Eastern North America at European Contact," in *Trade Before Civilization: Long-Distance Exchange and the Rise of Social Complexity*, edited by Johan Ling, Richard J. Chacon, and Kristian Kristiansen (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 143.
[217] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," 203.

how Cutshamekin's political economy provided a consistent flow of spiritual goods that displayed his power and influence as a major Native leader. Cutshamekin risked losing additional diplomatic support and spiritual power through the loss of subordinate Indigenous leaders to the praying towns.

Part of the problem surrounding the wampum beads arose from European colonialism and trade. Mario Schmidt argues that the pre-contact usage of wampum in Dawnland afforded sachems their political superiority, but post-contact encounters, when Europeans freely traded with Natives for furs, allowed non-sachems access to wampum beads. For the first time, with this access, new wampum owners "were not only recognized as exceptional members of society but were able to contest the political power of the sachem by comparing their own wealth and vision with those of the sachem."[218] Providing less tribute to Cutshamekin allowed praying town Native leaders the opportunity to retain prestige goods and challenge the authority of their powerful leaders. This outcome was not due to blind forces of English colonialism but rather intentional acts by Native figures who sought after diplomatic and spiritual power through cultural means. Political shifts through English trade and wampum currency also occurred in other Algonquian societies in the mid-Atlantic regions of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.[219]

Minor Christian sachems, moreover, remarkably advanced their sacred power by establishing new relationships and displaying their diplomatic expertise over spiritual objects within the newly established praying towns. The extensive Native Christian network Waban helped construct promoted his diplomatic abilities and sachemship through his skill in controlling Christian spiritual sources within times of crisis and instability. Despite the

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[218] Mario Schmidt, "Why Wampum Is More Money Than Scholars Think: A New View on Seventeenth Century Coastal Algonquian Societies," *Journal of Finnish Anthropological Society* 39, No. 2 (Summer, 2014): 30.
[219] Stephen R. Potter, "Early English Effects on Virginia Algonquian Exchange and Tribute in the Tidewater Potomac," in *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast,* edited by Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood, and Tom Hatley (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 215-241.

misunderstanding of and opposition to the cultural phenomena by Puritan ministers, praying town leaders refused to hand over sacred objects useful for developing their authority in the changing Dawnland landscape. The spiritual economy of Algonquian sachems slowly shifted the power dynamics to those who were most loyal to the Puritans and the praying town system. Cutshamekin insisted on upholding the cosmological sources that first provided him power as a sachem in the 1630s, but by the 1640s, his unwillingness to adapt his strategy of spiritual power motivated new Native rivals to accommodate Christian power and undo his tributary authority.

Summary

In the *Tears of Repentance* tract that contains the written and professed confessions by Christianizing Natick leaders in 1652, it should come as no surprise that Cutshamekin was not a participant. Throughout the tracts, the Puritan pastors question his loyalty to the English and their God and continually doubt his conversion into the faith. The last remark made by John Eliot about Cutshamekin implies the Puritan's apprehension of the great sachem's leadership in 1654: "By which occasion (together with some other Providences of God, as the death of Cutshamoquin, and the coming of Josias, to succeed in the Sachemship in that place)."[220] Eliot believed that the great Massachusett sachem's death further benefited their promotion of the faith in Dawnland. His point also suggests that Cutshamekin was consistent in maintaining his connection to the sacred world and esoteric power against the Christian religion. His career was fueled by cosmological connections and the control of sacred objects of power, so the introduction of the Christian faith certainly threatened his leadership. Cutshamekin's declining power, however, was not merely an inevitable product of European imperialism. Sacred disruptions caused other Dawnland sachems to find alternative remedies and power to restore

[220] Eliot, "A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel," 304.

balance in their communities, and a few, like the Nipmuck sachem Waban, pursued the new Christian pathway for stability. The rise of new sachems with access to spiritual power, sacred objects, and powerful allies caused the great sachem's loss of influence and prestige. Rather than becoming merely a tragic hero, Cutshamekin fought fearlessly for his spiritual convictions by preserving his access to the sacred world and defending his tributary system till the very end.

Chapter V

PASSACONAWAY

The Puritan ministers were greatly surprised by the great Penacook sachem's affections for them. "He did exceeding earnestly, importunately invite me to come and live there and teach them," says John Eliot. Passaconaway was the great sachem over the Penacook confederacy that resided in the Merrimack River valley. Although the praying towns were very distant from this domain, Puritan pastors made yearly trips up to the northern region of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for the seasonal Indigenous gatherings that occurred on the tributary. The Penacook sachem, who previously expressed both hesitancy about and interest in the Christian religion, spoke earnestly to Eliot about his willingness to hear more in 1649. He made many suggestions to the ministers, hoping to convince them to partake in further religious dialogue, but the sachem's words were overall not as receptive to Christianity as Eliot desired. "He farther added," says Eliot, "as if one should come and throw a fine thing among them, and they earnestly catch at it, and like it well, because it looks finely, but they cannot look into it to see what is within it, and what it is within, they cannot tell whether something or nothing, it may be a stock or a stone is within it, or it may be a precious thing." Unsure of the nature of Eliot's faith, Passaconaway's speech made it clear to the Puritan: the people of Pawtucket were not willing to blindly follow the ministers and their religion.[221] The power of the English *manitou* did attract Indigenous leaders who observed English dominance and success from a distance, but the Penacook sachem was not fully convinced that it was worth embracing. As a sachem-powwow of tremendous sacred power, Passaconaway exerted great strength and authority through his connections to

[221] Henry Whitfield and John Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 189.

otherworldly entities. His fascination with Puritanism was due to English resilience and survival over the previous decades, but the sachem feared the use of that power against his own people.

Unlike the Nipmuck sachem Waban and Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin, Passaconaway's narratives in *The Eliot Tracts* never occur within the bounds of the praying towns. His dialogues with the Puritan ministers are limited to a few interactions within his tributary domain in the Merrimack region, and they highlight how sachems outside of the missions perceived Puritan settlers and their religion. Like most Algonquians, the Penacook sachem spiritually integrated Puritan *manitou* into his dualistic, cosmological framework that understood reciprocal equity and ceremonial respect as sacred functions of upholding balance with other-than-human beings in Dawnland. As the English settlers advanced on the eastern seashore, sacred disruptions broke out across the landscape and radically altered the relationship between Natives, the foreign invaders, and their other-than-human persons with whom they aligned.

Historians debate whether Passaconaway converted to the Puritan Christian faith or maintained his Indigenous spirituality, but the historical evidence certainly points to the latter. This chapter argues that Passaconaway, while establishing friendly, diplomatic relationships with the Massachusett Bay Colony leaders, held the English people of powerful *manitou* in suspicion and regarded them with distress. Rather than embracing Puritanism or seeking to balance its sacred power with his own, the sachem hesitantly incorporated the new settlers into his confederacy, with growing interest in their brilliant connections to sacred power. Passaconaway primarily sought to preserve his spiritual power against both Native and English enemies through social, diplomatic, and cosmological pathways, consolidating his strength to control the devastating impact of ecological and sacred disruptions. His success in these endeavors resulted

in a confident, well-crafted relationship with the English newcomers and a forthright challenge to Puritan ideas and beliefs.

Consolidating Sacred Power and the Shaping of Penacook-Bay Colony Relations

The land of the Penacooks in the early seventeenth century was a thriving agricultural region with lakes and water systems that supported a large Indigenous population. Many different people groups – such as the Winnipesaukee, the Ossipee, the Amoskeage, the Nashua, the Souhegan, the Pawtucket, and many other western Abenaki groups – lived alongside Lake Winnipesaukee and the Merrimack River with its extended tributaries. The vast region of what became southern New Hampshire and northeastern Massachusetts was considered the Penacook confederacy under the authority of their great sachem Passaconaway. Daniel Gookin includes the Penacook people in his discussion of the Pawtucket peoples, who were connected to the tributaries of the Merrimack on the Massachusett Bay side, as a formidable sachemship, and they held "amity with the people of Massachusetts." The socio-political dynamics of Dawnland that existed prior to English arrival and shaped the nature of English settlements on the southeastern coastline were pivotal for the development of English imperialism and the later expansion of Puritan towns and missionizing efforts.[222]

Amid the slow, continuous contact between English and French traders and the Dawnland peoples, epidemics spread through trade systems and well-connected communities throughout the territory. With many access points by land and water, the Merrimack landscape functioned as a major trade route along the eastern coast utilized by Indigenous hunters, traders, and travelers alike. As a result, Gookin describes the 1616-17 disease as a thoroughly devastating

[222] Janine A. Carson, "Indians of New Hampshire," in *The Indian Heritage of New Hampshire and Northern New England*, edited by Thaddeus Piotrowski (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 111; and Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England: Of Their Several Nations, Numbers, Customs, Manners, Religion and Government, Before the English Planted There* (Boston: Apollo Press, 1792; Reprint, Gale Research: Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Series), 8-9.

event among Penacook tribes: "But these also were almost totally destroyed by the great sickness before mentioned."[223] Most estimates suggest that the death total from European diseases reached about ninety percent of the total population by the end of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the combined impact of smallpox in 1633-1634 certainly legitimizes Gookin's description of total ruin, as both Native and European inhabitants suffered unremittingly. Environmental disasters caused sacred disruptions and, as a result, compelled Indigenous communities to spiritually resolve their broken relationships with Dawnland *manitou* and the *manitou* of English settlers.[224]

Passaconaway was an older warrior and sachem during the contact period of European exploration and colonization. As a leader with spiritual and diplomatic power, the great Penacook sachem ruled over a coalition of Native tribes that gave continued allegiance to him during the destructive environmental disasters. An extraordinary figure, Passaconaway acquired a unique reputation for being both a sachem as well as a powwow. In Thomas Morton's account of the leader, he states that Passaconaway, "that Sachem or Sagamore, is a Powah of greate estimation amongst all kinde of Salvages there."[225] It is difficult to determine whether Passaconaway become a sachem-powwow before or after the sacred disruptions, with his proficiency in survival and controlling illnesses supporting his otherworldly abilities.

European diseases, especially smallpox, struck both the young and the old, commoners and elites. The resulting destabilization of communities also led to power-based war. The Pawtucket sachem, Nanepashemet, died during a battle against Mi'kmaq invaders in 1619, who

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[223] Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England,* 9.
[224] Alan C. Swedlund, "Contagion, Conflict, and Captivity in Interior New England: Native American and European Contacts in the Middle Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts, 1616-2004," in *Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America*, edited by Catherine Cameron, Paul Kelton, and Alan Swedlund (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 150-152.
[225] Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Boston: Prince Society, 1883), 150-151, https://archive.org/details/newenglishcanaan00mort/mode/2up.

sought to take advantage of the shattered community.[226] This time of warfare and epidemics restricted the recovery rate of Native communities and hindered the stabilization of hierarchical leadership roles. Jason and Naomi Eden highlight the importance of elderly adults in seventeenth century Dawnland communities and how their connection to spiritual power, preservation of tradition, and wisdom in warfare and diplomacy were instrumental for communal prosperity and stability.[227] Without the arbitration and guidance of these elders in a quickly changing world, communal alliances shifted and reorganized as new leaders vied for power and foreign peoples invaded the landscape.

During the drastic environmental breakdowns, Passaconaway managed to maintain his diplomatic and spiritual power as a sachem-powwow. European diseases swept through Dawnland and subverted the influence and authority of powwows who lacked the experiential knowledge necessary for providing remedy to impacted communities. The questioning of powwow authority that resulted most likely led to two results: the rise of new, younger leaders, like a *pniese*, to fill the vacant positions or the assumption of the powwow role by an extraordinary leader connected to sacred power. The Penacook sachem exemplifies the latter of the two options. Sachem-powwows are a rare occurrence within the historical records of the seventeenth century, with only one other well-documented case. Tispaquin, a sachem-powwow during King Philip's War in 1675, was powerful enough, according to the report, to stop bullets from entering his body during combat.[228] Both Passaconaway and Tispaquin were powerful figures and the exceptional results of cultural volatility and spiritual insecurity during periods of

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[226] David Stewart-Smith, "The Pennacook Lands and Relations: Family Homelands," in *The Indian Heritage of New Hampshire and Northern New England*, edited by Thaddeus Piotrowski (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), 123.
[227] Jason Eden and Naomi Eden, "Views of Older Native American Adults in Colonial New England," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 25, No. 3 (2010): 285-298.
[228] Benjamin Church, *The History of King Philip's War* (Boston: J. K. Wiggin, 1865), 53, https://archive.org/details/historyofkingphichur/mode/2up?q=tusp.

great stress caused by English colonization, warfare, and disease. This consolidation of roles and their spiritual power was a necessary part of Dawnland survival and the persistence of authority in times of crisis. Passaconaway bridged two worlds of tremendous spiritual authority as a great sachem in order to preserve his power and community in the face of sacred disruptions.

The arrival of English Separatists at Patuxet (Plymouth) under William Bradford's leadership in 1621 coincides with Passaconaway's first engagement with the foreign peoples. As the Mayflower disembarked, William Hubbard writes that "powwawes of the country together, … for three days incessantly had, in a dark and dismal swamp, attempted to have cursed the English, and thereby have prevented their settling in those parts." Dawnland Natives had followed the foreign ships along the coast with hostility, and by the time the foreigners settled ashore, powwows attempted to demolish them with their spiritual power, conjuring natural forces of weather to destroy the English. Hubbard's account suggests that Passaconaway attempted the very same maneuver "when he perceived he could not bring about his end therein."[229] Swamps were seen as sacred space for Dawnland ritual specialists who connected with and drew power from other-than-human beings. Those spiritual entities then granted *manitou* to the ritual wielder and acted on their behalf within the world.[230] These efforts by Indigenous powwows, however, failed to prevent English settlement and prosperity in the region. Neal Salisbury, on the other hand, believes that the early English settlers wrongly perceived Native spirituality as witchcraft from their European perspective. Moreover, he notes that the "Pokanoket were ritually purging themselves of their hostilities toward the English as a prelude to their diplomatic reversal."[231]

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[229] William Hubbard, *A General History of New England, From the Discovery to 1680* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1848), 60, https://archive.org/details/generalhistoryof00hubb/mode/2up.
[230] Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 192.
[231] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 114.

Ritual purging prepared the Native agent for contact with powerful *manitou*, displaying their belief that the foreign, English settlers controlled overwhelming spiritual connections. The disagreements between Hubbard's account and Salisbury's interpretation are not necessarily irreconcilable. Practically, by drawing power from other-than-human persons in sacred spaces, Indigenous peoples either sought the destruction of their new enemies or the establishment of diplomatic ties with potential new friends. Powwows seeking aid from other-than-human beings in the swamps worked towards both peaceful and militaristic ends.

As Wampanoags around Plymouth befriended the English settlers, other Native groups like the Penacook avoided the foreign people with their unknown *manitou*. As more English settlements, such as Salem and Boston, formed in southern Dawnland, disease and warfare created further instability and sacred imbalances, even for Native groups distant from the colonies. The Merrimack region was well-traveled due its resources and trade routes, so smallpox epidemics ravaged the Penacook tributary system. As a result, Passaconaway needed to stabilize his leadership, defend his people's land, and deter foreign enemies from invading. The great sachem and Nanepashemet's widow, the squaw sachem of Pawtucket, agreed to cement their diplomatic alliance and craft a kinship network by marrying their children together. Native social hierarchy and individual rank was an important aspect of Algonquian marriages. Elite members, especially children of sachems, married individuals of the same rank for the purpose of forging and maintaining alliances within the community and between different groups.[232] The two daughters of Passaconaway married the two sons of the Pawtucket leader in 1629.[233] These

[232] Ann Marie Plane, *Colonial Intimacies: Indian Marriage in Early New England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 18-26.
[233] Stewart-Smith, "The Pennacook Lands and Relations," 123.

unions centralized the power and unity of the Merrimack region under the Penacook confederacy and Passaconaway's control.

Military invasions from Native Americans and European settlers alike created havoc for the great sachem throughout the seventeenth century. Both Mohawks and Mi'kmaqs terrorized northern Dawnland and its many Algonquian peoples prior to English colonization. The early formation of the Penacook confederacy likely started as a means of survival against these Indigenous invaders.[234] Gookin notes that the Mohawks, equipped with French guns from Canada and supplies from Dutch traders on the Hudson river, raided Nipmucks, Massachusetts, Penacooks, and many other Dawnland peoples as late as 1670.[235] As English foreigners settled in southern Dawnland and slowly expanded throughout the 1630s, colonial settlements slowly became an additional problem for Passaconaway. Jere R. Daniell believes that Passaconaway's coalition "were not a people accustomed to fighting, especially against a superior enemy,"[236] so in this view, the great Penacook sachem passively responded to English encroachment – and eventually established peace with them – because he lacked the capacity to resist. This view by Daniell, however, is both historically inaccurate and absurd. The Native town of Penacook bolstered three major forts: one near Sugar Ball Bluff, another on Fort Eddy Plain, and the northern structure near Sewall's Falls.[237] The pressures of Indigenous warfare obligated Algonquian leaders, like Passaconaway, to consider new options, such as economically and

[234] Christopher Johnson, *This Grand & Magnificent Place: The Wilderness Heritage of the White Mountains* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006), 13.
[235] Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, 22-23.
[236] Jere R. Daniell, *Colonial New Hampshire: A History* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1981), 10.
[237] Stewart-Smith, "The Pennacook Lands and Relations," 127. Dawnland Natives, particularly the Penacooks and Pawtuckets, utilized their forts defensively against Mohawk invaders, Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, 22.

diplomatically integrating the English into his alliance network.[238] As newcomers into Dawnland politics, the English were a formidable people of unknown *manitou*, which certainly made them dangerous neighbors but possibly powerful allies.

The relationship between the great sachem Passaconaway and the governor of the Massachusett Bay Colony John Winthrop was unsteady, tense, and confusing dueinf the time between the initial settlement in 1630 and the peace pact of 1644. English leaders either skeptically engaged Dawnland peoples who desired trade connections and peace terms or altogether avoided relations with the invaders due to socio-political and spiritual concerns. English traders took significant risks in developing trade relationships with Natives to acquire higher profits and influence in the colonies. According to John Winthrop's journal on September 4th of 1632, "One Jenkins, late an inhabitant of Dorchester, and now removed to Cape Porpus, went with an Indian up into the country with store of goods to truck, and, being asleep in a wigwam of one of Passaconamy's men, was killed in the night by an Indian, dwelling near the Mohawks' country." Even as the Bay Colony allied with the Massachusett and Wampanoag peoples, settlers often continued to fear other distant Native groups, hearing rumors of military conspiracy against their new settlements. The Penacook peoples remained a distant and obscure Indigenous group to the colony for much of the 1630s, but this encounter with Passaconaway's people established a beneficial connection between the two communities. In fact, the Native guide assisting Jenkins may have been a Penacook utilizing historic trade routes in northern Dawnland, which explains why the murder and robbery of the guide was performed by a

[238] Incorporating foreign peoples, particularly Europeans, into Indigenous political alliances was a common practice by Algonquian peoples when it benefitted their regional communities. For Dawnland examples, see John H. Humins, "Squanto and Massasoit: A Struggle for Power," *New England Quarterly* 60, No. 1 (Mar., 1987): 54-70. For Chesapeake-Virginia examples, see Dylan Ruediger, "'Neither Utterly to Reject Them, Nor Yet to Drawe Them to Come In': Tributary Subordination and Settler Colonialism in Virginia," *Early American Studies* 18, No. 1 (Jan., 2020): 1-31. For Carolinian examples, see Michael Leroy Oberg, "Tribes and Towns: What Historians Still Get Wrong about the Roanoke Ventures," *Ethnohistory* 67, No. 4 (Oct., 2020): 579-602.

Mohawk warrior. As the act of theft occurred under the oversight of this guide, Jenkins's goods were "fetched back by Passaconamy," which established a new connection between the Penacooks and the English.[239] Mutual enemies created new diplomatic ties of friendship between Algonquians and English settlers, but these relationships remained fragile. By 1633-34, smallpox desolated Pawtucket and Penacook communities in the Merrimack region, likely due to its well-traveled pathways.[240] Passaconaway and other Native leaders struggled to protect their communities as sacred imbalances wrought havoc and healing ceremonies were seemingly inoperable. This epidemic may be the reason why the Penacook warriors did not involve themselves in the Pequot War of 1637, especially if their recovery rate was significantly slower than their southern neighbors.[241] It is also likely that Passaconaway did not fully trust the English. These sacred disruptions kept the relationship between Passaconaway and the English colonies tense as the *manitou* of the English created instability and chaos despite the Penacook sachem's spiritual power.

Further suspicions of war conspiracies unraveled English trust in Native allies in 1642. As the feud between the Mohegan sachem Uncas and Narragansett sachem Miantonomoh fueled settlers' fears of Indigenous conflict, English magistrates preemptively sought to disarm their Native allies in hopes of calming tensions within the colonies. Winthrop requested Cutshamekin's "guns, bows, etc., which was done, and he came willingly," and thereby removed any uncertainties the magistrates held against him.[242] Expecting more Indigenous allies to follow

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[239] John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649*, *Vol. I*, edited by James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908): 91.
[240] On the connection between the communicability of smallpox in colonial America in relation to high-functioning trade routes to English settlements, see Paul Kelton, *Epidemics and Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).
[241] David Stewart-Smith, "Pennacook-Pawtucket Relations: The Cycles of Family Alliance on the Merrimack River in the 17th Century," *Algonquian Papers-Archive* 25 (1994): 450-451.
[242] John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649*, *Vol. II*, edited by James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 74-75.

suit, the general court sent a warrant for Passaconaway along with forty armed men. In Merrimack country, the militia was unable to reach the great sachem's wigwam due to heavy rain but managed to kidnap Passaconaway's "son's and took him, which they had warrant for, and a squaw and her child, which they had no warrant for." Once the armed men returned to the colony, they were immediately ordered to return the woman and her child, but in the middle of this debacle, Passaconaway's son escaped. Immediately, Winthrop and the magistrates ordered Cutshamekin to inform the Penacook sachem that the entire ordeal was a mistake and that the kidnapping of his son "was without order." Of course, this gesture was a lie, but it was, for Winthrop, one necessary for English survival.

Until that moment, fears of Native-English conflict were only rumors; the Bay Colony magistrates' failure ruptured their alliance and provided Penacook leaders legitimate reasons for war. Passaconaway "knew not what was become of his son and his squaw" and desired no further talks until his duty as a sachem was accomplished. Once they were safely brought back home, the great sachem "sent his eldest son to us, who delivered up his guns."[243] The mistake almost cost the English an all-out war with the Penacook confederacy. Their great sachem Passaconaway, though, restrained the potential violence by dispensing some guns to the English and maintaining peaceful relations. Both the Merrimack and English leaders desired avenues of peace, although the Bay Colony leaders still severely distrusted their friendly neighboring sachems. The Penacook sachem likely did not trust Winthrop and the Bay Colony leaders either or desire to encounter their foreign sacred power, as he sent his eldest son, undoubtedly a skilled warrior and diplomat, to them instead of presenting the weapons himself.

[243] Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649*, *Vol. II*, 75.

Amidst these misgivings, epidemics and warfare continued scourging the landscape and inflicting sacred disruptions on Algonquian communities. The death of Miantonomoh in 1643 at the hand of Uncas's brother Wawequa drew the United Colonies further into Dawnland political stressors and fears of Narragansett retaliations. Winthrop, like other English magistrates, was unsure how to appropriately respond to these wars even a year later, with their Narragansett neighbors wondering "why we should be against it [war]." Although the Mohegan-Narragansett conflict continued beyond 1644, Winthrop was able to establish a peace pact with five other major sachems in close vicinity to Boston. That following summer, "Passaconaway, the Merrimack sachem, came in and submitted to our government, as Pumhum, etc. had done before."[244] The Penacook sachem did not concern himself much with the violent conflicts of the lower region, but considered the advantage of a firm alliance with the English against Mohawk and Mi'kmaq invaders. Perceiving English power as formidable, Passaconaway again submitted himself "and their people and lands under our jurisdiction" in 1645 to further strengthen their close their alliance.[245] As English colonial expansion inevitably reached the Merrimack tributary, the sachem-powwow could no longer dispute the *manitou* of these foreign peoples. While the presence of sacred imbalances remained, peaceful tactics with the English *manitou* created opportunity to increase Passaconaway's control over his Native enemies. The preservation of his spiritual power as a powwow and sachem necessitated a diplomatic alliance with the prevailing English settlers and supported his control over the Merrimack River system.

Times of Crisis, Spiritual Integration, and the Decline of Powwow Influence

The early colonial period of Dawnland greatly challenged Algonquian spirituality, the power of powwow leaders, and Indigenous connections to *manitou*. Sacred disruptions – disease,

[244] Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649*, *Vol. II*, 168-169.
[245] *Ibid*., 223.

warfare, droughts, hurricanes, etc., caused by both human and other-than-human beings – during the arrival of English settlers implicated the foreign peoples as dangerous, mysterious, and effective with their spiritual power. Their ability to survive epidemics, grow their population, and economically and diplomatically align themselves with Dawnland peoples, such as the Massachusetts, Nipmucks, Wampanoags, Pawtuckets, Penacooks, and others, was perceived by Algonquian communities as evidence of their connection to sacred sources, but this connection was not always accepted positively by Indigenous leaders. Moreover, Sam White argues that the weather of the Little Ice Age severely disrupted North American climate patterns, which collapsed food and resource economies, and led to the declining power of spiritual authority. By evaluating records of conflicts between Native Americans and the English over the power of prayer in controlling the weather, White posits that Indigenous peoples often observed English spirituality with great suspicion, thinking it was malevolent witchcraft.[246] Similarly, English settlers promoted their religious power over disease, weather, and natural events against the practices of their Indigenous counterparts, which the English believed was devilish witchcraft.[247] Naturally, these accusations of invalid religious practices and beliefs led to competition between Puritan pastors and Indigenous powwows.[248]

Puritan writers recorded Algonquian spirituality and beliefs about other-than-human persons from the perspective of their Christian worldview. Thomas Shepard and John Eliot

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[246] Sam White, "'Shewing the difference between their conjuration, and our invocation on the name of God for rayne': Weather, Prayer, and Magic in Early American Encounters," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, No.1 (Jan., 2015): 33-56.

[247] Kenneth P. Minkema, "Possession, Witchcraft, and the Demonic in Puritan Religious Culture," in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, edited by Colleen McDannell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 367. Also see Alfred A. Cave, "Indian Shamans and English Witches in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 128, No. 4 (1992): 239-254; and Kenneth P. Minkema, "The Spiritual Meanings of Illness in Eighteenth-Century New England," in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, edited by Colleen McDannell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 269-298.

[248] Another example of this religious conflict is the worldview disputes between the Powhatans and the English, see Helen C. Rountree, "Powhatan Priests and English Rectors: World Views and Congregations in Conflict," *American Indian Quarterly* 16, No. 4 (Autumn, 1992): 485-500.

encountered powwows willing to discuss Indigenous beliefs during their missionary efforts. According to the two Native ritual specialists:

> They came to bee made Pawwaws, and they answered thus, that if any of the Indians fall into any strange dreame wherein Chepian appears unto them as a serpent, then the next day they tell the other Indians of it, and for two days after the rest of the Indians dance and rejoice for what they tell them about this Serpent, and so they become their Pawwaws.

Visions and soul-sleep encounters were sacred experiences that promoted the individual to a specialized role, a *pniese*, with prominent access to *manitou*. Like other ritual specialists in seventeenth century Dawnland, these powwows drew their authority and abilities from *Cheepi*, the Horned Serpent of the world-below. Missionaries interpreted the common form of *Cheepi*, the serpent, through their own worldview as the Devil, who was represented as a snake figure. This connection encouraged Puritans to imagine powwows as "great witches having fellowship with the old Serpent, to whom they pray, and by whose meanes they heale sick persons."[249]

Early colonial accounts of Passaconaway highlight his powwow abilities as the outworking of the Devil's power. Morton writes an account of Passaconaway's mystical talents and power over the natural world:

> He would goe under water to the further side of a river, to broade for any man to undertake with a breath, which thing hee performed by swimming over, and deluding the company with casting a mist before their eies that see him enter in and come out, but no part of the way hee has bine: like-wise by our English, in the heat of all summer to make Ice appeare in a bowle of faire water; first, having the water set before him, hee hath begunne his incantation according to their usuall accustome, and before the same has bin ended a thick Clowde has darkened the aire and, on a sodane, a thunder clap hath bin heard that has amazed the natives.

[249] Thomas Shepard, "The Day-Breaking, If Not The Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 97. Also see William Simmons, "Southern New England Shamanism: An Ethnographic Reconstruction," *Papers of the Seventh Algonquian Conference* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1976): 217-255.

Gaining the admiration of both Algonquians and English alike, Passaconaway shocked his audiences with his spiritual power over nature, which Morton believed "was done by the agility of Satan, his consort."[250] Puritan leaders discouraged their citizens and congregations from seeking out Native healers and wonder-workers because they believed these individuals practiced witchcraft through demonic power. William Wood notes that Dawnland peoples often interacted with two other-than-human beings: "Ketan who is their good God" and "sometimes the Devill for requital of their worship." In his perspective, Algonquians ritually requested aid from *Kiehtan* for "faire weather, for raine in time of drought, and for the recovery of their sick," but might resort to *Cheepi* if they never received a response. Powwows were essential for their ceremonial expertise and ability to invoke spiritual beings to "bring to passe strange things." As a notable sachem-powwow, "Pissacannawa, that hee can make the water burne, the rocks move, the trees dance, metamorphize himself into a flaming man." His powers also granted him abilities to "burne an old one [leaf] to ashes, and putting those into the water, produce a new greene leafe" and "make of a dead snakes skinne a living snake." These remarkable spiritual skills, according to Wood, were "through the Devils helpe" in connecting Indigenous people to sources of sacred power.[251]

In a similar manner, Algonquian peoples spiritually integrated the other-than-human beings of the English religion into their dualistic, cosmological worldview. Careful attention to historical sources is necessary to evaluate how Native peoples understood their English neighbors in the early seventeenth century, as an uncritical examination of Puritan writers and their assessments of Indigenous beliefs often results in misunderstandings of Native spirituality.

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[250] Morton, *New English Canaan*, 151.
[251] William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (Boston: Prince Society, 1865), 92-93, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Wood_s_New_England_s_Prospect/ZWoFAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1.

For example, Amanda Porterfield argues that "Algonquian and Iroquois beliefs in witchcraft derived, at least in part, from Christian ideas about the Devil and his witches. Natives borrowed the Christian belief that evil was caused by the Devil and his witches to explain and cope with the sufferings they experienced as subjects of Western colonization." She posits four different types of witchcraft beliefs held by Algonquian peoples: first, the Christian God was the Devil and to be avoided; second, Native ritual specialists were all self-admitted witches; third, Christianizing Natives viewed Native rituals as Devil worship; fourth, some Indigenous peoples believed that other Natives intentionally caused disease and disaster because they were witches.[252] One problem with her assessments is her assumption that Algonquian peoples accepted the idea of the English Devil over their functional understanding of *Cheepi*. Undoubtedly, many Christianizing Natives slowly embraced a distaste and repudiation for some of their former religious practices, as the Puritan leaders instructed. At the same time, non-Christianizing and some Christianizing Natives did not believe in the same wickedness of *Cheepi* that English Christians believed of the Devil. One powwow told Shepard said that "hee did never hurt any body by his Pawwawing."[253] Another former powwow named Tequanonim who became a Christian affiliate said that he "never did hurt to any, but always good, endeavouring the good and preservation of the Indians, whereunto also he was accompted by them to be strongly provided." Tequanonim as a powwow used powerful *manitou* – "not onely in the shape of living creatures, as Fowles, Fishes, and creeping things, but Brasse, Iron, and Stone" – to protect his people from sacred disruptions in Dawnland.[254]

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[252] Amanda Porterfield, "Witchcraft and the Colonization of Algonquian and Iroquois Cultures," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 2, No. 1 (Winter, 1992): 104-110.
[253] Shepard, "The Day-Breaking," 97.
[254] Henry Whitfield, "Strength out of Weaknesse, Or a Glorious Manifestation of the Further Progresse of the Gospel among the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 239.

Some scholars, such as Alvin Morrison and David Ezzo, argue that the world-below entity in Algonquian cosmology, *Cheepi*, was an inherently evil being, like the Puritan devil, while the world-above entity was good.[255] However, as presented in the powwow confessions above, Natives did not view *Cheepi* as an evil being to avoid but as a *manitou* to respect and invoke for the benefit of the community. Algonquians viewed the other-than-human person of the world-below as an occasional trickster, but never as a malevolent figure like the Puritan Devil.[256] Connecting to the world-below meant a powwow's acquisition of spiritual power, but the determining factor of whether that power was good or evil was how the person wielded it towards others. Native Americans did have categories for witches and wizards in association with how they used their sacred power. If a person with sacred power acted against their community and caused illness, disease, and death, they were considered a witch or a wizard. For English Puritans, Jehovah was good and Satan was evil, so any connection with the world-below was perceived as a demonic possession. The assumption that Algonquian peoples similarly viewed the world-below as evil and the world-above as good is incorrect and reflects how modern injections of Western European ideas can conceal historic Indigenous beliefs.

Dawnland Algonquians at times avoided the English settlers because their *manitou* caused sacred disruptions. Rather than viewing the English *manitou* as an evil spiritual being, they believed the mixing of spiritual sources could cause severe imbalances and reciprocal breakdowns, as the world-above and the world-above required ceremonial harmony. It is important to note that both the above and below worlds were separated by the human world and connected through animate beings in the space of that middle-world. As sacred realms with

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[255] Alvin H. Morrison and David A. Ezzo, "Dawnland Dualism in Northeastern Regional Contact," *Papers of the Sixteenth Algonquian Conference* 16 (November 1, 1985): 131-150; and David A. Ezzo, "Montagnais & Southern New England Religion," *Whispering Wind* 39, No. 3 (2010): 14-17.
[256] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*, 190.

opposite natures – male-female, light-dark, death-life, white-black, bird-snake, etc.[257] – both worlds had ceremonial obligations that required a delicate balance in the human world. Overly concentrated sacred power and ceremonial imbalance often led to explosions of sacred disruptions and reciprocal disunity between human and spiritual entities. Passaconaway's ability to manipulate these spiritual relationships between his communities and the sacred world by orchestrating cosmological connections and ceremonial balance allowed him to increase his reputation as a powerful sachem and powwow. His encounters with John Eliot during the late 1640s underscore how the great Penacook sachem interpreted English Christianity and perceived the nature of the Puritan *manitou*.

Passaconaway's Spiritual Preservation in the Face of Puritan *Manitou*

The Puritan missions led by John Eliot, Thomas Shepard, the Mayhew family, and other English pastors were centralized in southern Dawnland, primarily within the bounds of the Massachusett Bay Colony and Martha's Vineyard. Although Eliot desired to expand the praying towns outside of the English colonies, he never received the financial support needed to fund his efforts. Consequently, Eliot did travel further north to the Merrimack region in hopes of spreading his Puritan faith to the distant Native communities. *The Eliot Tracts* record a few encounters between the Puritan minister and the great Penacook sachem Passaconaway. While the written dialogues are brief, they reveal how some distant native leaders both welcomed and challenged the pastors.

[257] Christopher Carr, "Persons of the Directions: Ontology and Ethics Meet Cosmology in Understanding the World Views and Rituals of Adena, Hopewell, and Post-Contact Eastern Woodland Indian societies," in *Landscapes of Ritual Performance in Eastern North America*, edited by Cheryl Claassen, Vol. 8 (Oxbow Books, 2023), 101-124. Also see William Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 37-64.

When Passaconaway first encountered the Puritan missionaries in 1647, he still feared his mysterious and powerful foreign neighbors. Shepard relates the incident between Eliot and Passaconaway as a failure:

> Mr. Eliots going up the Country lately with Mr. Flint, Captain Willard of Concord, and sundry others [praying town Natives], towards Merrimath River unto that Indian Sachim Passaconnaway, that old Witch and Powwow, who together with both his sons, fled the presence of the light, and durst not stand their ground, nor be at home when he came, pretending feare of being killed by a man forsooth that came only with a book in his hand, and with a few others without any weapons only to bear him company.

Shepard, and possibly Eliot, believed that Passaconaway was pretending to fear the English visitors and avoided their arrival.[258] Based on the previous accounts in John Winthrop's journals, it is likely that the Penacook sachem distrusted English motives, especially regarding spiritual matters and sacred power. From the Indigenous viewpoint, the Puritan, carrying his Bible, intentionally came armed with potent *manitou*.[259] With the power to control disease, cause environmental disasters, and create sacred imbalances. Passaconaway equated Eliot with a worker of witchcraft, a person intent on using sacred power against his community. Afraid of potential sacred imbalances and physical death, Passaconaway fled. The English ministers misunderstood and expressed resentment towards the sachem's act, saying "that Satan is but a coward in his Lyons skin even upon his own dunghill." Even though the minister did not preach the Puritan faith to the influential sachem, Eliot and his team of praying town Natives did speak to many other Penacook people in the town. Without the presence of their sachem, though, none

[258] Thomas Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel Breaking Forth Upon the Indians in New-England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 135.
[259] Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 199.

of the community members seem to have seriously considered adopting the Puritan faith or consider attending the praying towns.[260]

The two leaders finally engaged in religious dialogue in 1648 when Eliot revisited the Merrimack region. "There is a great fishing place upon one of the Falls of Merrimack River called Pautucket, where is a great confluence of Indians every Spring," according to Eliot, "and thither I have gone these two years in that season." From a missionizing perspective, the spring season was Eliot's best opportunity to preach the Puritan faith among northern Algonquians. The river systems and lakes provided the region with an abundance of goods that Natives across Dawnland traveled to obtain. Here, Eliot finally met the "old Papassaconnaway, who is a great Sogamore, and hath been a great Witch in all mens esteems (as I suppose your self have often heard) and a very politick wise man." Their conversation, according to the tracts, was brief, but the intent of both religious figures was clear. Eliot told the Penacook sachem about his previous trip the Merrimack region, intentionally reminding Passaconaway of his absence, and spoke of his sermon out of the Book of Malachi. Calling the sachem to embrace the Puritan message, "to beleeve in Christ for the remission of their sins," and to forsake "their former wayes of pawwawing, and praying to the Devill," Eliot directly challenged the great sachem to accept the Puritan God. Undettered, Passaconaway asked, "If it be thus as you teach, then all the world of Indians are gone to hell to be tormented for ever, until now a few may goe to Heaven and be saved; Is it so?" Eliot agreed, and Passaconaway refused to discuss the matter further.[261] Dawnland Algonquians believed in an afterlife but not in the same manner as the Puritans. English ministers taught that it was necessary to believe in their God to enter a peaceful afterlife,

[260] Shepard, "The Clear Sun-Shine of the Gospel," 135.
[261] Edward Winslow, "The Glorious Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 153.

and the rejection of their God led to everlasting torment. However, Algonquians taught that human souls returned to the southwest, the spiritual land of *Kiehtan*, through an appropriate ceremonial burial, except for those of terrible character and social standing.[262]

Passaconaway's question reveals his adept understanding of the English religion and his deeply-held concerns about accommodating the English *manitou* and its unwillingness to allow most Natives into a peaceful afterlife. Eliot continues, "After a good space, this old Papassaconnoway speak to this purpose, that indeed he had never prayed unto God as yet, for he had never heard of God before, as now he doth. And he said further, that he did beleeve what I taught them to be true. And for his owne part, he was purposed in his heart from thenceforth to pray unto God."[263] This dialogue convinces some historians that Passaconaway happily embraced the Puritan religion and made strides toward conversion, despite his distance from the praying towns. Carson affirms that the Penacook sachem "did allow the famous Indian apostle, John Eliot, to convert him to Christianity."[264] Eliot's account, however, is not without its criticisms. His ambitions for Indigenous conversions tended to overstate how peaceful dialogues led to missionizing faith, particularly when the breakthrough would grant further support for his missionary endeavors. Textually, it is unclear what the great sachem meant by his belief in Eliot's message and his desire to pray unto the English *manitou*. Both individuals believed in an afterlife, angry *manitou* that hated wickedness, and the importance of connecting to other-than-human beings for communal preservation and power. From this account alone, however, not much can be said for Passaconaway's supposed newly-found faith.

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[262] Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650*, 188. The Narragansett believed that the "souls of murderers, thieves, and liars, they say, wander restlessly abroad," Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, edited by Dawn Dove, Sandra Robinson, Lorén Spears, Dorothy Herman Papp, and Kathleen J. Bragdon (Yardley, Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2019), 113.
[263] Winslow, "The Glorious Progress of the Gospel," 153.
[264] Carson, "Indians of New Hampshire," 111.

Eliot's eagerness to convert the great sachem encouraged his return the following summer of 1649. As he was sick in the spring, the Puritan minister regretted not evangelizing many of the Native peoples as he had previously, but Passaconaway's "affection to me, and to the Word of God" invigorated the preacher. The great sachem told the minister that his "coming thither but once in a yeere, did them but little good, because they soone had forgotten what I taught." Evidently, the Penacook and Pawtucket peoples forgot most of what the Puritans preached to them the year before. By Puritan standards, it is unlikely these people were considered converts by the English religious leaders at the time. Furthermore, Passaconaway was not entirely sure what to even believe regarding the Puritan faith. "You tell us of praying to God," says Passaconaway, "(for so they call all Religion) and we like it well at the first sight, and we know not what it is within, it may be excellent, or it may be nothing, we cannot tell, but if you would come unto us, and open it unto us."[265] Expressing a willingness to engage in spiritual dialogue, Passaconaway pressed Eliot to explain his Puritan beliefs and challenged his religion. This dialogue reveals multiple factors of the Penacook sachem's preservation of sacred power. First, the great sachem was a powwow of immense spiritual power. R. Todd Romero says that "Passaconaway's reputation as a spiritually powerful man was emblematic of the degree to which Indians believed that an individual could draw on the supernatural."[266] Calling Eliot to make his religion known so they could determine if his spirituality was something or nothing was a direct challenge. The sachem-powwow drew sacred power from *Cheepi*, and possible from *Kiehtan*, but could he connect with Jehovah in the way about which Eliot spoke? The people of Pawtucket could not determine whether the Puritan religion was superior to their own because

[265] Whitfield and Eliot, "The Light Appearing More and More," 189.
[266] R. Todd Romero, "'Ranging Foresters' and 'Women-Like Men': Physical Accomplishment, Spiritual Power, and Indian Masculinity in Early-Seventeenth-Century New England," *Ethnohistory* 53, No. 2 (2006): 291.

they had not seen the English *manitou* in visions, dreams, or ceremonial activity. Second, it is likely Passaconaway requested Eliot to reveal his religion's power and control over sacred disruptions. The previous year, the Puritan ministers admitted that Passaconaway's people "have no meanes of Physick at all, onely make use of Pawwawes when they be sick, which makes them loath to give it over."[267] Powwows who were reputable for their power over disease became important leaders in Indigenous communities, and Passaconaway fulfilled this spiritually authoritative role as a sachem-powwow among his tributary system. His challenge of Eliot served to determine who of the two was more powerfully connected to *manitou* sources. The missionary tract does not give Eliot's response to the assertions made by the Indigenous leader. Unable to meet the sachem's demands, the minister continues his missionary narrative with hopes of returning to Pawtucket in the future, an encounter that, if it ever occurred, was not recorded.

Summary

The great Penacook sachem remained on friendly terms with the English magistrates and Puritan pastors, but the historical evidence is against his acceptance of Christianity. Most of the Penacook confederacy of northern Dawnland refused to adopt the Christian *manitou*. Eliot writes in 1670 that a few Natives at Pawtucket desired to "pray unto God" because "their sachems refused to pray to God, so signally and sinfully, that Captain Gookins and my self were very sensible of it."[268] Despite their attempts of missionizing the Merrimack region, Bay Colony pastors were not able to convince sachems like Passaconaway of English superiority, power, and beliefs. Passaconaway's preservation of Indigenous sources of *manitou* over the socio-political

[267] Winslow, "The Glorious Progress of the Gospel," 154.
[268] John Eliot, "A Brief Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England, in the Year 1670," in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard* Baxter, edited by Michael Clark (United Kingdom: Praeger, 2003), 405.

disarray caused by sacred disruptions had established his reputation as a sachem-powwow in the early seventeenth century, and the spiritual integration of English *manitou* into Dawnland cosmology was met by Passaconaway's challenge of his spiritual rivals and their ability to control other-than-human persons in the world. English colonization created sacred imbalances that the great sachem believed only his otherworldly power as a powwow could remedy and control.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

The English settlers entered a Native American world. Rather than an abandoned wilderness ready to be civilized, southern Dawnland was filled with a multitude of Algonquian peoples, competing diplomatic alliances, communal religious beliefs and spiritual practices, and powerful other-than-human beings that saturated every space. A pervasive Indigenous worldview rooted Native Americans within the Dawnland landscape and fashioned a narrative of life and power cascading from generation to generation. The arrival of Europeans in the early 1600s – with deadly diseases, instruments of warfare, empowering religious customs, and imperial convictions to conquer – led to new encounters that forced Natives to respond, adapt, and engage with the ever-increasing threat of powerful foreign peoples. As this paper has argued, Algonquians of Dawnland interacted with the English on their own terms and oriented on their cosmological view of the world. It is important to evaluate Indigenous encounters with the Puritan missionaries and cross-cultural religious dialogue from the Algonquian viewpoint to better understand their motives, beliefs, and actions.

Environmental upheavals, unstoppable disease, unprecedented warfare, and land-invading foreigners in the 1630s created social, political, and spiritual calamities within Algonquian communities. Communal disharmony between potent *manitous* – other-than-human persons that ordered the world – and Dawnland peoples became the Native explanation for these catastrophes. Each disastrous event was culturally understood as a sacred disruption. Ceremonial adoption of warfare victims was often implemented to bring spiritual renewal and power back to the local community, but English methods of total-war against left many societies in continual disarray. These events created the context for the Puritan missionization in the 1640s with varying results. Most Algonquians spiritually integrated the English religious system into their

cosmological view of the world and interpreted Puritan spirituality as an alternative pathway to sacred power.

Seen as a new source of sacred power, Puritanism resembled a threat to some Indigenous peoples and a route towards sacred renewal for others. The Nipmuck sachem Waban and his small, recovering community accommodated the Puritan message as a means of spiritual healing and remedy of sacred disruptions. Other leaders, such as the Massachusett sachem Cutshamekin, willingly allied with the Massachusett Bay colony for both economic and military benefits, but his slow reluctance to interact with the Puritan pastors exemplifies his doubt of their spiritual superiority. His reliance on Dawnland *manitou* and Massachusett ceremonial practices shows how powerful sachems continued to rely on Indigenous methods of spiritual renewal over the English religion, but the power of the foreign peoples could not be denied. Cutshamekin, struggling between preserving Dawnland ceremonies and accommodating Puritan practices, ultimately cooperated with Christian missionaries in the praying towns to continue upholding his tributary authority in the region. When Waban optimistically embraced Christian practices and beliefs, he promoted the new spiritual pathway as a new option for healing, renewal, and power, which encouraged other sachems to likewise follow. In response to the reversal of political and diplomatic authority, Cutshamekin was forced to involve himself in the praying towns supportively while Waban's political and spiritual power continuously grew in the praying town tributary system.

The Penacook sachem Passaconaway, on the other hand, enforced his spiritual superiority over the English by challenging their religious beliefs and power. The Merrimack region's distance from praying towns allowed the Penacook leaders to ensure that political alliances with the Bay colony did not insinuate religious subjugation. Although sacred disruptions likewise impacted his towns, Passaconaway examined, questioned, and debated Eliot's spiritual message

in comparison to his connection with *manitou* sources. His preservation of Indigenous sacred power against newer methods demonstrates how Algonquians interpreted Christianity as another form of *manitou* and disruptive spiritual power.

New pathways did not always equate to superior ends, especially in dealing with potent spiritual beings and volatile energies. Dawnland sachems responded to the Puritan missionaries and their religion through their cosmological understanding of the world. Based on their context, Algonquian sachems either chose to accommodate Puritan spiritual practices to establish sacred balance or preserve their own spiritual ceremonies in display of their own skill and control over the sacred world. The Christian missionaries often misunderstood Algonquian religious culture and the motivations of Natives who they spoke with. Moreover, Dawnland was a dangerous place. Native leaders risked the survival of their communities, their leadership, and personal power amid sacred disruptions. Seeking sacred power and balance through the Puritan *manitou* was a hazardous endeavor, but a pathway consistent with Indigenous practices and their understandings of the spiritual domain.

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