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# Lasting Marks: The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon and the Survival of the Mashantucket Pequot Nation

Shawn Wiemann

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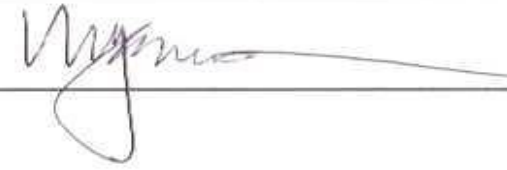
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**LASTING MARKS: THE LEGACY OF ROBIN CASSACINAMON AND  
THE SURVIVAL OF THE MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT NATION**

**BY**

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B.A. in History, SUNY Geneseo, 2001  
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**History**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May, 2011**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Jeanne, and my sisters, Elizabeth and Samantha, who have been a source of constant support. I would not have gone this far without them.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Dr. Margaret Connell-Szasz, my advisor and dissertation chair, for continuing to encourage me over the years, and mentoring me in the classroom and over course of writing and editing these chapters. Your guidance will remain with me as I continue my career. Thank you for your patience, wisdom, and countless letters of support.

I also thank my committee members, Dr. Melvin Yazawa, Dr. Michael Oberg, and Dr. Paul Hutton, for their valuable recommendations pertaining to this study and assistance in my professional development. Dr. Oberg helped start me on this scholarly path, and I am forever grateful. I also wish to thank Dr. Ferenc Szasz, who began this project with me, but was sadly unable to see its completion. He is missed, but I hope that some of his spirit and love of the craft can be felt within these pages.

To Dr. Kevin McBride, thank you for your insights and for pointing me in the right direction. I am also indebted to the Mashantucket Pequot tribe, and the librarians, archivists, and researchers at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Mashantucket, CT, as well as those at the Connecticut State Archives in Hartford, for their invaluable help and resources. You all made this project possible.

To Nathan Wilson, thank you for the many years of support, advice, and friendship. To Todd Leahy, thank you for your friendship and for kindly reading these pages. To my sisters, Beth and Samantha, your encouragement is greatly appreciated.

And finally to my parents, Kevin and Jeanne, your love and support have sustained me throughout this process. Thank you both.

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**ABSTRACT**

My dissertation is a political and cultural history of seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian New England. Between the Pequot War of 1637 and King Philip's War in 1675-76, a covalent Anglo-Algonquian society existed in New England. This created conditions which allowed the Pequots to reconstitute their communities after the devastation of the Pequot War. Robin Cassacinamon was instrumental in this process. His skills as an interpreter, diplomat, intermediary, and community leader connected Cassacinamon to the surviving Pequots and to important regional Algonquian and Puritan figures of the time. Cassacinamon became Pequot sachem, leading his people until his death in 1692. His work provided the Pequots with essential tools needed for long-term survival as an identifiable people: a land-base and the ability to form and maintain Pequot communities. Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots navigated this conflicting political climate to pursue their own agenda.

The period between the Pequot War and King Philip's war provided a finite window of opportunity by which Cassacinamon could exploit the seventeenth-century



Native strategies outlined in Eric Spencer Johnson's work. These strategies included alliances, marriages, settlement patterns, coercion, and others. Cassacinamon's deep ties to the Pequots and other Algonquian groups, as well as with the Winthrop family and other colonial leaders, let him exploit various political and social tools. Cassacinamon's skills made him an essential part of regional negotiations between these Algonquian and English polities. By operating in the gaps and intersections where these polities met, Cassacinamon and the Pequots carved out a place for themselves within the regional social and political power structure. By focusing on Cassacinamon's story, a greater understanding of how the Pequots survived after the Pequot War is reached. Cassacinamon's biography also broadens our understanding of this seventeenth Anglo-Algonquian society, as well as what happened when the Anglo-Algonquian frontier shifted to an Anglo-Iroquoian frontier after King Philip's War. Thus, my dissertation is not just a biography; it is a political and cultural study of New England, with broader Atlantic World elements. It provides insight as to how an indigenous North American population exploited overlapping political and social systems and tactics to survive in a changing colonial world.

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## Introduction

The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (MPMRC) opened its doors to the public on August 11, 1998. Billed as “a new kind of archaeological, cultural, and historical museum,”<sup>1</sup> the Pequot Center brings to life the history and culture of the Pequot Tribal Nation, as well as other Native American peoples. Mashantucket Pequot leaders spared no expense on the project; the facility cost \$193.4 million dollars, money generated from the tribe’s Foxwoods Casino, one of the largest and most successful gambling resorts in the eastern United States.<sup>2</sup> The complex boasts 85,000 square feet of permanent exhibits, containing dioramas, ethnographic and archaeological collections, interactive computer programs, videos and films, as well as the work of Native American artisans and craft specialists.<sup>3</sup> The museum houses the Mashantucket Pequots’ tribal archive, where historians, archaeologists, and others employed by the tribe — tribal members and their allies — preserve, analyze, and protect the tribe’s cultural, material, and intellectual heritage. The MPMRC operates as a Native-controlled scholarly space; the general public and academics can come to share the tribe’s history on the Pequots’ terms.

On my first day at the museum I took the standard tour through the complex. The entire structure is designed to tell the Pequots’ story. The upper levels deal with early tribal histories of the Pequots and other indigenous peoples. Each subsequent level adds

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<sup>1</sup>Neil Asher Silberman, “Invisible No More,” in Vol. 51 of *Archaeology*, no. 6 (November-December 1998): 68-72.

<sup>2</sup>Robert D. McFadden, “Indian Bureau Recommends Federal Recognition for Two Pequot Tribes in Connecticut,” *The New York Times*, 25 March 2000, sec. B5.

<sup>3</sup>“Facts About The Permanent Exhibits,” in *MPMRC-Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center* [official online page of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation]; available from <http://www.mashantucket.com/handicap/efacts.html>; Internet; accessed on 02 December 2010.

new details to the Pequots' tribal history: a recreated Pequot village, detailing the daily lives of Pequot men, women, and children and their subsistence activities; the importance of wampum to all the indigenous peoples of Northeastern North America, and the Pequots' central role in its manufacture; and finally, the arrival of Europeans — the Dutch and the English — in the 1620s, who introduced a fundamental shift in the Pequots' world.

At the bottom level, darker and colder than the rest of the museum, I entered one of the two theaters that play a film — “The Witness” — at regular intervals throughout the day. “The Witness” dramatizes the defining tragedy in Pequot history: the massacre of Pequot men, women, and children at Mystic Fort during the Pequot War in 1637. Thirty minutes later, as the credits rolled and the lights turned on, I left the theater for the next stage of the tour. The tribe's efforts at rebuilding were symbolized by rising from the depths of the museum. I ascended from the bottom floor on an escalator that took me to a brightly-lit section with tall windows that flooded the level with natural light. As I reached the top, a life-sized statue of a middle-aged Algonquian man stood at the top. The statue commemorates a seventeenth-century Pequot man wearing a mix of English and Algonquian clothing. The bright red coat and wampum jewelry signified the man's status as an important Pequot leader. In one hand he held a musket, in the other, a land deed securing the Mashantucket reservation for the tribe.<sup>4</sup> The statue depicts Robin Cassacinamon, the most important Mashantucket Pequot sachem.

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<sup>4</sup>Photo of Robin Cassacinamon statue, *Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center Booklet* (Mashantucket, CT: Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center, 2000), 42.



The statue and the museum memorialize Cassacinamon's place in Pequot history.<sup>5</sup> Outside the tribe, few people have heard of this important Algonquian leader. When Cassacinamon is mentioned in scholarly works, he remains a minor character in the stories told about other regional leaders. This peripheral status holds true for the Pequots as a whole. They take center stage in the Pequot War, but are then thrust into the background after 1637, a scattered and defeated people. Scholars shift their focus to other Algonquian confederations, such as the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, which assumed greater prominence leading up to King Philip's War in 1676. Yet, by neglecting Cassacinamon and the Pequots we ignore an important aspect of the relationship between colonial populations and indigenous groups. Cassacinamon not only shaped Pequot history, he played an important role in Anglo-Algonquian New England politics throughout much of the seventeenth-century. This dissertation seeks to correct this historical oversight.

\*\*\*\*\*

This study addresses two interconnected themes: it offers a biography of the seventeenth-century Pequot leader Robin Cassacinamon, and a political and cultural history of seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian New England. Between the Pequot War of 1637 and King Philip's War in 1675-76, a "covalent" Anglo-Algonquian society existed in southern New England, one that bound Algonquian and English colonial communities together in deep political, social, and economic ways. According to

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<sup>5</sup>The statue is an artistic representation; no known image of Cassacinamon exists. However, in recent years it has been suggested that the portrait of the late seventeenth-century sachem, formerly thought to be Ninigret II, may in fact depict Robin Cassacinamon. The portrait is currently housed at the School of Art in the Rhode Island School of Design, which was founded in 1877. The portrait is from the late seventeenth-century (circa 1681), and was gifted to the school by Mr. Robert Winthrop, who himself was a direct descendant of John Winthrop Jr.

historian Neal Salisbury, this political and economic world “differed markedly from that which emerged” after King Philip’s War.<sup>6</sup> During this forty-year period, Native peoples throughout the region — the Pequots, the Mohegans, the Narragansetts, the Niantics, the Wampanoags, and many others — participated in a system of “interdependence rather than dependence” with the English colonies. That degree of interdependence vacillated at times due to competition over natural resources, namely land. While a certain level of social segregation persisted, these communities (Algonquian and Anglo) remained bound to one another.

Southern New England Algonquians lacked the political autonomy they possessed before Europeans arrived, but they still controlled enough land to provide for their subsistence needs and engaged in reciprocal relationships with other Natives and the English. Southern Algonquian peoples traded furs, engaged in land transactions, sold their services and labor, and purchased European manufactured goods. For their part, the English desired and required what the Natives offered. Their voracious hunger for land was all-consuming of course, but the New England colonists also depended on the services of Natives as hunters, interpreters, laborers, and consumers. And, distanced as they were from Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan Commonwealth, the colonists relied on the wampum controlled by the Natives, which served as a currency to enact these transactions.<sup>7</sup> Algonquians and colonials needed one another.

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<sup>6</sup>Neal Salisbury, “Indians and Colonists in Southern New England after the Pequot War: An Uneasy Balance,” in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, eds. Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 82.

<sup>7</sup>Salisbury, “Indians and Colonists in Southern New England,” 82-83, 94; Lynn Ceci, “Native Wampum as a Peripheral Resource in the Seventeenth-Century World-System,” in *The Pequots in Southern New England*, 60-63.

Despite the realities of this interdependent relationship, in the minds of colonial officials the Natives remained too independent. In an attempt to exert English dominance over the Anglo-Algonquian frontier, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and New Haven created the United Colonies of New England in 1643. Although no major Anglo-Algonquian confrontation disrupted New England between 1637 and 1675, tensions and political intrigue remained constant. Algonquian leaders like the Mohegan grand sachem Uncas, the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi, and the Narragansett-Niantic sachem Ninigret vied to be the premier Native leader in southern New England. An ongoing series of Native-on-Native attacks took place, as the major Algonquian confederations battled for supremacy on the changing Anglo-Algonquian frontier. The colonies failed to control the region; they succeeded only in positioning themselves at the center of Native politics. Since the English would not leave, Native leaders incorporated them within the Algonquian political structure as allies and pawns. In so doing, these leaders secured places for themselves and their people in the regional political and economic networks of mid-seventeenth century southern New England. Operating within these overlapping political situation, Cassacinamon played all sides to his advantage and secured for the Pequots a new home and semi-autonomy; these were significant gains after the devastation of the Pequot War.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Eric Spencer Johnson, “Some by Flatteries, Others by Threatenings,” PhD dissertation (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993), 105-109, 307-315; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 134; Salsibury, “Indians and Colonists after the Pequots War,” 85-86. See also J.M. Sosin, *English America and the Restoration Monarchy of Charles II: Transatlantic Politics, Commerce, and Kinship* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 2, 74-76; Stephen Saunders Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of Empire, 1550-1681* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 441; Bernard Bailyn, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 54-57, 59-60, 75; Stephen Innes, *Labor in a New Land* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), chapter 2; Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America:*

The unique conditions fostered by this interconnected society enabled the Pequots to reconstitute their communities after the devastation of the Pequot War, and Robin Cassacinamon was the essential figure in this process. The Pequot War of 1637 destroyed the Pequots' influence as a regional military power, but even after the war the tribe influenced regional politics in direct and indirect ways. In the ensuing decades, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts vied for control over the Pequots' former lands. The competing Algonquian and colonial powers also battled for jurisdiction over the surviving Pequots: the Algonquians desired the survivors to join their confederations, while the colonies wanted the Pequots subjugated and erased as an identifiable people. These competing agendas between the Anglo-Algonquian polities facilitated the agenda of Cassacinamon and the Pequots, as they successfully played each side to achieve their ultimate goal: the reestablishment of Pequot communities in their traditional territory and a definitive place within the social and political framework of seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian southern New England.

In this contest of loss, risk, and redemption, Cassacinamon's skills as an interpreter, diplomat, intermediary, and community leader made him a successful cultural broker. His abilities tied him to the surviving Pequots and to other important Algonquian and Puritan leaders, such as Connecticut governor John Winthrop Jr., Uncas, and Ninigret. Cassacinamon's lineage and abilities as a cultural broker secured for him the position of Pequot sachem, a role he held from the 1640s until his death in 1692. He drafted a blueprint that subsequent Pequot leaders followed as they faced the challenges

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*Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 234; Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 74-75.

of the subsequent centuries, and these achievements enabled the Pequots to survive into the twentieth-century, when they began their next major resurgence. Cassacinamon's leadership provided the Pequots with two crucial needs: a land-base and the ability to form and maintain Pequot communities. These victories proved essential in the development of Pequot kin networks and interpersonal relationships, the quintessential conditions they needed for their long-term survival as an identifiable people.

Biography is as an effective format for such a political and cultural study because Cassacinamon was fully integrated into the fabric of seventeenth-century southern New England Anglo-Algonquian relationships. In understanding his life and work, a greater understanding of most of the major events of the century is reached. Cassacinamon's tactics demonstrate that the Pequots were not helpless victims, nor were they simple pawns of other ambitious leaders and communities. The actions taken by Cassacinamon and the Pequots showcase the agency of indigenous peoples, even when deprived of the traditional sources of political power: a sizeable land base, large populations, and military strength. Cassacinamon's story thus serves as a unique lens through which to view the major events of seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian New England.

Previous works have examined the importance of the Pequot War and King Philip's War in shaping New England society; Alfred Cave, Francis Jennings, Jill Lepore, Jenny Hale Pulsipher, Alden Vaughan, Neil Salisbury, James Drake are just some of the many voices that have contributed to our increased understandings of these events. Biographers have examined the lives of obvious important leaders like John Winthrop Jr. and Uncas, and their roles in the political and social changes of the time.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite

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<sup>9</sup>The only well-known historical Pequot to receive a previous biographical treatment was the nineteenth-century minister and social commentator William Apess, in the works of Barry O'Connell.

Cassacinamon's decades-long presence in regional politics, he has rarely received attention as a prominent ethnohistorical subject. At best, scholars stated his importance to the Pequots. A few authors described his appearance in key historical events. In 1851 and 1852, John William De Forest and Francis Caulkins, each recognized Cassacinamon as an important Pequot leader after the Pequot War.<sup>10</sup> De Forest and Caulkins knew that Cassacinamon secured the Mashantucket reservation for the tribe, and they criticized the brutal treatment the Pequots received during the Pequot War and the abuses they suffered after it. However, De Forest and Caulkins only briefly acknowledge Cassacinamon's significance; no serious, substantial examination of Cassacinamon has been done. This scant attention in the existing scholarship of Anglo-Algonquian New England has perpetrated a disservice to both Cassacinamon and the Pequots.

Only one essay to date has focused solely on Cassacinamon. Written by Dr. Kevin McBride, head of the Research Department at the MPMRC, "The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period" appears in Robert Grumet's edited collection, *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*. McBride provides an overview of Cassacinamon's life, charts his major successes, and illustrates his importance in the Pequots' survival after 1637. McBride introduces Cassacinamon's importance, but since his essay is only eighteen pages long, McBride cannot analyze Cassacinamon's skills, tactics, and alliances in an in-depth manner. McBride's essay is a valuable starting point that hits many important themes, and is an important part of this dissertation. A major study that examines Cassacinamon's importance in Pequot history

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<sup>10</sup>William De Forest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut, from the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, CT: 1851), 226-229, 231, 242-246, 260, 283, 422; Francis Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut, from the First Survey of the Coast in 1612 to 1852* (New London, CT: 1852), 186-187.

and the broader seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian social and political world provides an essential addition to both Native American and Early American historiographies. To understand how and why the Pequots lost the Pequot War and reconstituted themselves after it, we must chart these broader associations.

Cassacinamon's story is intrinsically linked to the story of the Mashantucket Pequots; at the same time, the Pequots' history is inextricably connected to the history of the English colonial Atlantic world.

Cassacinamon's relationship to other Algonquian leaders has not been examined in great detail, and to understand how the Pequots reconstituted themselves this needs further exploration. This is particularly true of the relationship between Cassacinamon and his principal adversary, the Mohegan sachem Uncas. I feel the comparison with Uncas is critical, since Uncas and the Mohegans absorbed most of the surviving Pequots after the Pequot War. For the Pequots to re-emerge as a distinct tribal group, Cassacinamon engaged Uncas in a political contest of leadership, with the support of the surviving Pequots as the ultimate prize. The English colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay participated in this Algonquian duel, as each sachem counted on powerful English allies to support his agenda. All the while, colonial leaders pursued their own interests. Of the English participants, John Winthrop Jr. retains critical importance; the alliance between Cassacinamon and the younger Winthrop profoundly affected the sachem and the Pequot people. The complex relationships between Cassacinamon, Uncas and John Winthrop Jr. shall prove worthy of further exploration, as is Cassacinamon's connection to other Algonquian leaders like Wequashcook, Ninigret,

and Metacom. This dissertation examines how these interconnected personal relationships proved essential in the Pequots' struggle.

This study is an essential companion to the most recent biographies of two important Connecticut leaders: the Mohegan Uncas and Puritan scion and Connecticut governor John Winthrop Jr. Michael Oberg's *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* attracted much positive attention for the way it situated Uncas in the historical context of seventeenth-century New England, and in its examination of the complex political and social alliances Uncas exploited to secure Mohegan interests.<sup>11</sup> Oberg discusses Cassacinamon in his book, since Uncas's plans for regional prominence included incorporating the Pequots into his Mohegan confederation. However, since Uncas is Oberg's major concern, Cassacinamon naturally takes a secondary position in the narrative, appearing only in certain dramatic incidents that involved Uncas. The same holds true for Walter W. Woodward's *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676*. Woodward examines how the younger Winthrop established himself — apart from his famous father — as an independent political leader in the region. Woodward recognizes Cassacinamon as the leader of the Pequots, but the sachem takes a secondary role in the narrative. He is, in essence, a “sidekick” to the much more prominent younger Winthrop. This imbalance is unfair, and not reflective of the reality. The available evidence suggests that, despite surface differences, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. formed a true partnership. I believe that a biography of Cassacinamon expands upon this social and political sphere of Anglo-Algonquian relations. Cassacinamon's story showcases the ability of Native peoples in

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<sup>11</sup>Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).



the Northeast to utilize both indigenous and European political, legal, and social systems to protect themselves and their interests.

Other works continued this trend of only mentioning Cassacinamon, or providing peripheral descriptions of his importance. The most important scholarly volume to date dealing with Pequot history was *The Pequots of Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, edited by Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry, which came out of a conference sponsored by the tribe. These essays provide a historical overview of Pequot history from before contact with Europeans until shortly after the Mashantucket Pequots gained federal recognition in 1983. Among the scholars who contributed essays, Jack Campisi and Kevin McBride, still serve as directors for the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. This collection recognized Cassacinamon's importance, but the authors mention him only in passing, and they do not attempt to analyze his efforts.

A number of scholars have addressed the various strategies employed by various New England Natives to survive over the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth-centuries in a white-dominated society. These authors include Russell Barsh, Amy Den Ouden, Ann McMullen, Jean O'Brien, Michael Silverman, and Jack Campisi. While living on the outskirts of New England society, Native peoples continued to participate in the regional economy, particularly in sea-related industries like whaling. They sustained their population levels through intermarriage with whites, blacks, and other Native peoples. Most importantly, Native communities in New England retained their distinctiveness as Native by maintaining family and kinship bonds and by holding on to a land base, even as those lands faced continued encroachment by outsiders. These tactics

allowed New England Natives to withstand the constant pressures exerted by Euro-American society.<sup>12</sup>

Barsh, Den Ouden, and Sarah Louise Holmes all deal with the Pequots, but their studies do not focus solely on Robin Cassacinamon. Both Den Ouden and Holmes examine the legal strategies employed by the Mashantucket Pequots to protect their reservation from white encroachment and resist the seizure of their reservation lands by whites. Barsh concentrates on the economic and kinship links formed between Natives (particularly Pequots) and African-Americans in the whaling industry. Den Ouden and Holmes discuss the role of Pequot sachems in these legal fights, with Holmes in particular discussing Cassacinamon's efforts to protect Pequot lands. However, protection of Pequot lands is Holmes's central focus; her study, while insightful, does not capture the full scope of Cassacinamon's abilities or influence.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, the issue that has generated the most public attention for the Pequots is Foxwoods Resort and Casino, alongside the general issue of gaming and Native peoples.<sup>14</sup> The three most recent "popular histories" of the Pequots, published in

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<sup>12</sup>For their part, McMullen, Campisi, Silverman, and O'Brien do not really address the Pequots, but their works provide a necessary context for the Mashantucket situation, as the tribes they address dealt with many of the same social and economic issues. Therefore, no scholar has yet tackled a community study of nineteenth and twentieth century Mashantucket that examines how the tribe survived long enough for their second resurgence to take place in the second half of the twentieth century. As it stands, only one unpublished, eighty-five page undergraduate thesis in Anthropology, "Redefining Themselves: The Mashantucket Pequots Return to a Reservation Community," by Kristyn K. Joy of Amherst College, attempts to explain why Mashantucket Pequots strengthened their ties to the reservation in the late 1970s and 1980s. According to Joy, who based her argument on interviews with tribal members and written sources, the key to the Mashantucket Pequot's renewed success is rooted in their synthesis of tribal identity and personal identity membership. Submitted in 1988, Joy's thesis does not address the tribe's later success and development, nor does it address Cassacinamon in any way.

<sup>13</sup>Sarah Louise Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People': Mashantucket Pequot Strategies in Defense of Their Land Rights," PhD dissertation (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, 2007).

<sup>14</sup>The most recent scholarly work addressing the Pequots' relationship with gaming, Paul Pasquaretta's *Gambling and Survival in Native North America*, tackles this theme by employing the idea that "gaming" can be viewed as a metaphor for the many struggles Pequots and other Native peoples have

2001 and 2003, all address this issue of gaming, some under the aegis of anti-Pequot political agendas. The authors — Jeff Benedict, Kim Isaac Eisler, and Brett Duval Fromson — are not scholars, but lawyers and journalists. For them, the issue of casino gambling is intrinsically tied to the question of whether or not the Mashantucket Pequots are "real Indians." Benedict's interpretation is by far the most egregious. He asserts that the entire Mashantucket resurgence was premised on fraud, and that the Mashantucket are not "real" Pequots, but members of other New England tribes and other minority groups that have illegitimately claimed Pequot heritage purely for economic gain. It is not surprising then that Benedict's work has won considerable favor among certain political interest groups in Connecticut, who view the Mashantucket Pequots in a less than favorable light. Unlike Benedict, Eisler and Fromson recognize that tribal members are, indeed, Pequots, but they raise another issue by questioning if the Mashantucket Pequot tribe too dependent on the casino as a unifying factor. These authors mention Cassacinamon briefly, but only as a Pequot leader who remains in the distant past and has no contemporary significance to Pequot history.

Cassacinamon's peripheral treatment by scholars belies the historical reality. From the mid-1640s until his death in 1692, Cassacinamon consistently appears in the colonial records as a leader, diplomat, interpreter, and provocateur. However, the Pequots did not simply obey Cassacinamon's orders. They launched their own independent actions and required that Cassacinamon prove his worth as a sachem. If he

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faced since European contact. A revised version of Pasquaretta's Ph.D. dissertation in English literature, this book examines gambling metaphors in colonial war narratives, nineteenth-century romance fiction, tribal memorials, and Native American novels. Pasquaretta argues that these literary sources reflected the many survival strategies Native peoples participated in for their own survival as "games of chance." Pasquaretta mentions Cassacinamon in his discussion of why former Pequot tribal chairman Richard Hayward chose Cassacinamon's mark as the tribe's symbol. However, since this work is a literary analysis, it neglects Cassacinamon's participation in the intricate network of Anglo-Algonquian alliances and relationships.

had failed to do this, they would not have followed him. The Pequots' world changed, but the requirements of the sachemship did not. A sachem must be persuasive and demonstrate a proven ability to lead. Given their perilous circumstances after the Pequot War, the surviving Pequots required a well-connected leader who could successfully coordinate the various interconnected networks of alliances and contentious relationships. Cassacinamon possessed those abilities, so the Pequots granted him their allegiance.

The decades between the Pequot War and King Philip's War provided a finite window of opportunity through which Cassacinamon could exploit the seventeenth-century Native strategies outlined in the work of anthropologist Eric Spencer Johnson. In his dissertation, "'Some by Flatteries Others by Threatenings:' Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England," Johnson examines "the political processes within Native American societies of societies of seventeenth-century southern New England, focusing on the strategies used by individuals and groups to legitimize or challenge political authority within Native society." Johnson identifies seven strategies utilized by indigenous peoples: ideology, alliance, marriages, settlement patterns, coercion, the manipulation of material culture, and exchange.<sup>15</sup> In this important work, Johnson explores how the Algonquian leaders among the Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansetts, employed these strategies to legitimize their authority.

Johnson offers a profound interpretation of the political actions of seventeenth-century Algonquian leaders, and the value of his study cannot be underestimated. However, while Johnson draws on the experiences of several indigenous communities during the seventeenth-century for his study, and includes a brief discussion of the

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<sup>15</sup>Eric Spencer Johnson, "'Some by Flatteries, Others by Threatenings,'" PhD dissertation (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993), vi.

Pequots and Cassacinamon, his study concentrates primarily on the Mohegans and the Narragansetts. In one respect, this makes sense, since after 1638, those two powerful Algonquian confederations dominated the Native political scene throughout much of the century from positions of obvious political power. Still, the strategies Johnson examines — namely ideology, alliances, settlement patterns, and coercion — hold particular significance for Cassacinamon and the Pequots, and they provide a key to understanding Cassacinamon's importance and how the Pequots reconstituted themselves after the Pequot War. Sassacus, Pequot sachem during the war, failed in his duties because he failed to master these strategies. Denied the martial power they held before the Pequot War, these strategies acquired a vital level of importance for Cassacinamon and the Pequots; the Pequots depended on them in ways that the other, stronger, Algonquian confederations did not. By employing these tactics, and by exercising his linguistic and diplomatic abilities, Cassacinamon situated himself as an indispensable "information broker" on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. He transformed his influence as a cultural intermediary and information broker into tangible political gains for the Pequots.

The first two chapters of the dissertation deal with the political and social status of the Pequots prior to 1638. Chapter one provides an ethnographic profile of Pequot society before 1637. Cassacinamon came of age in the 1620s and 1630s, a time when Dutch and English traders and colonists were already known to the Algonquian peoples of southern New England. During this period, Europeans moved from the peripheries of New England into the Pequots' territory in present-day Connecticut. As the European presence moved ever closer to the Pequots' lands, they precipitated dramatic social changes within indigenous communities due to disease and displacement. However, this

also brought opportunities for political and territorial expansion for the Pequots. The tribe dominated the important wampum trade and extended its power and influence over several other Algonquian groups in the region. This prominence was short lived however, as other Native and European forces aligned against them.

The second chapter addresses the Pequot War of 1637, which proved the turning point of Pequot history. Cassacinamon does not figure in this chapter, because he is not mentioned in the existing documentation about the war. This absence from the records of the war suggests that Cassacinamon was not an office-holding sachem at the time. If he was not yet sachem, and had not distinguished himself during the war, he would have escaped notice by the English authorities. Despite Cassacinamon's absence, the chapter is nonetheless essential. It is the defining moment in Pequot history, and the turning point in Anglo-Algonquian relations in New England. The Pequots' defeat created the circumstances that Cassacinamon combated for the rest of his life and tenure as sachem. The Pequot War is also relevant because many of the Algonquian and English leaders whom Cassacinamon interacted with participated in the conflict: Uncas, John Winthrop Sr. and John Winthrop Jr., John Mason, Thomas Stanton, and others. Most importantly, the failure of Sassacus (the Pequot sachem during the war) to lead his people to victory provided lessons for Cassacinamon, and proved that for an Algonquian leader to survive, they needed powerful European allies to support his agenda.

Chapter Three propels Cassacinamon into regional politics and society. After the Pequot War, the victorious English and Algonquian alliance forced the surviving Pequots off their lands and dispersed them among the Mohegans, Narragansetts, and New England colonials. Cassacinamon led one branch of Pequot survivors after the war — the

“Western” group under Mohegan authority, which served as the genesis of the Mashantucket Pequots. As their leader, Cassacinamon devised several plans to remove his people from Uncas and the Mohegans, and ally with influential English leaders. This may seem strange, given English conduct during the Pequot War. However, Cassacinamon’s objectives are made clear when interpreted through the strategies outlined by Johnson. Cassacinamon’s partnership with John Winthrop Jr. proved essential to these plans, so this chapter explores Cassacinamon’s association with the younger Winthrop. A mutually beneficial relationship, the Cassacinamon-Winthrop (or Winthrop-Cassacinamon) alliance may have exemplified the concept of “fictive kinship.” Cassacinamon drafted the basic blueprints for success at this time: a strong political alliance, the migration of Pequots into Cassacinamon’s sphere of influence, and the manipulation of colonial legal processes and Algonquian political strategies to promote his own Pequot agenda.

Chapter Four encapsulates all of the major themes of this study. It begins in 1647, with Cassacinamon’s first attempt to free his community from the Mohegan Uncas, and concludes with Cassacinamon’s victory in securing their reservations within their traditional territory in 1666. Cassacinamon’s leadership of the Pequots combined with his alliance with John Winthrop Jr. and his personal skills as an interpreter and intermediary, fully enmeshed Cassacinamon in regional politics. Cassacinamon and the Pequots directly inserted themselves into political affairs and tense situations so as to foment or exacerbate discord between Algonquian and colonial groups. Cassacinamon navigated and manipulated these currents; in so doing, they secured the ultimate prize sought by these Pequots in 1666 — the two reservations of Noank and Mashantucket.

Cassacinamon broke the Pequots away from Uncas's control, but at the cost of placing the Pequots community under English jurisdiction. This balancing act secured for the Mashantucket Pequots a state of semi-autonomy that would remain in place for the ensuing decades of the seventeenth-century.

The fifth chapter examines the tactics Cassacinamon used to extend his sphere of interest into larger regional politics. Exploring international issues, this chapter brings to the foreground the relationship between the New England colonies and England proper, and explains how the Stuart Restoration altered that arrangement. The Restoration government of Charles II attempted to assert its control over New England and Anglo-Algonquian relations, even as it successfully conquered the Dutch colony of New Netherlands, renaming it New York after Charles' brother, the Duke of York. Cassacinamon used these opportunities to his own political advantage; he gained victories against his old rivals Uncas and Ninigret, and he achieved full recognition by English and Algonquian leaders as an established Algonquian diplomatic figure. However, during this period of trans-Atlantic change, the covalent Anglo-Algonquian society tipped in favor of the colonials. The power shift created new challenges for Cassacinamon and the Pequots, as they had to situate themselves in an English system that began to exclude them.

The conflagration known as King Philip's War temporarily arrested these changes, enabling Cassacinamon and the Pequots to thrust themselves in the forefront of Anglo-Algonquian relations in Connecticut. Chapter Six compares Cassacinamon's situation to the dilemmas faced by Metacom (King Philip) and the Christian Indian John Sassamon. The Pequot sachem possessed resources and abilities that Metacom and



Sassamon lacked; thus Cassacinamon navigated the social and political changes with greater success than either of those two individuals. During the war, Cassacinamon and the Pequots sided with the English. The Pequots reaffirmed old alliances and created new ones, and they forced concessions from colonial leaders who, once again, needed the Pequots' assistance. Cassacinamon's renewed alliance with the English produced tangible results: the Pequots gained adoptees, wampum, weapons, and other spoils of war. King Philip's War destroyed the covalent Anglo-Algonquian society of New England, but the alliance forged between Cassacinamon and the Connecticut colonial government offered the Pequots continued protection.

The long-term effects of the English victory in King Philip's War are discussed in Chapter Seven, as the Anglo-Algonquian frontier centered in New England shifted to an Anglo-Iroquoian frontier focused in New York. Cassacinamon reaffirmed his alliances with Connecticut leaders, but the Pequots could not avoid the ramifications of this political shift for long. This shift triggered the first significant internal challenge to Cassacinamon's position as sachem. Cassacinamon's legacy was evident following his death in 1692 as the sachem immediately achieved symbolic power. As factions within the Mashantucket Pequot tribe fought to establish their own leadership, subsequent Pequot leaders invoked Cassacinamon's name, memory, and his mark to legitimize their own authority and influence supporters among the tribe, a sign of things to come in the twentieth century.

In understanding Cassacinamon's story, a greater understanding of the Pequots' survival is reached. Thus, this study is not just a biography; it is a political and cultural study of New England, framed within broader Atlantic World elements. It provides

insights as to how an indigenous North American people exploited overlapping political and social systems and tactics to survive in a changing colonial world. Although the Pequots suffered a cataclysm in 1637, losing their political and military prominence, they did not become powerless victims. Cassacinamon tapped into the strength of the surviving Pequots and provided a focal point around which the tribe could rebuild their communities. In addressing the three interconnected themes of biography, community study, and seventeenth-century regional New England politics, the story of how Robin Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots survived in Anglo-Algonquian New England society attains clarity.

## Chapter 1: People of the Shallow Waters

In August of 1662, Algonquian and English colonial leaders assembled for the latest round of negotiations over land rights in the former Pequot country. Such councils were common after the Pequot War in 1637, when the Anglo-Algonquian alliance consisting of Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts defeated the Pequot confederation.<sup>16</sup> Though no longer the political and military power they once had been, the Pequots continued to shape regional politics: their territory served as a bargaining chip between polities, and the Pequots themselves a precious resource to the competing Algonquian and English powers. This meeting brought together representatives of the United Colonies and several Algonquian dignitaries, including the Mohegan grand sachem Uncas and his counselors. The Pequot sachem Robin Cassacinamon, leader of the semi-autonomous Pequots, also attended. Uncas claimed a disputed portion of the Pequot territory, and this meeting determined the validity of that claim. Cassacinamon and the other Algonquian leaders worked with English officials to construct a territorial map; the map confirmed that the disputed area originally belonged to the Pequots. However, Uncas was denied his victory.<sup>17</sup>

This episode typified the continuous negotiations between the political powers on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. Yet, it also revealed a more personal struggle: the ongoing contest between Uncas and Cassacinamon. For decades, the two sachems vied for the support of the Pequots and formed alliances with powerful colonial allies to

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<sup>16</sup>Eric Spencer Johnson, “‘Some by Flatteries and Others by Threatenings’: Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England” (PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1993), 115-121.

<sup>17</sup>“Plan of the Pequot Country and Testimony of Uncas, Casasinomon, and Wesawegun, August 1662,” *Acts*, II: 450.

further their own agendas. Though lacking military strength, Cassacinamon found ways to strike at Uncas. The Pequot sachem siphoned Pequots away from Mohegan communities, and forged his own networks of amity and alliance with Connecticut officials and other indigenous communities. This meeting provided yet another opportunity for Cassacinamon to thwart Uncas's desires. Cassacinamon declared that before the Pequot War Uncas was only the leader of a small community and was often "proud and treacherous to the Pequot Sachem." His insolence forced the Pequot sachem to "drive Uncas out of his country" as a punishment; only by "humbling" himself before the Pequot grand sachem was Uncas permitted to return to his country. Only his alliance with the English gave Uncas any political importance; it was the English who "made him [Uncas] high." Cassacinamon testified that much of the land Uncas claimed had been Pequot territory, and therefore, it belonged to the English, and not Uncas, due to right of conquest. Cassacinamon and the other witnesses charged that according to their manners and customs, Uncas had no lands at all, being so conquered...if [Uncas] should deny it, the thing is known to all the Indians round about."<sup>18</sup> Pleased that Cassacinamon's testimony coincided with their own interests, colonial authorities denied Uncas's claim. This displeased the Mohegan grand sachem. Uncas responded to Cassacinamon with a devious political attack of his own.

Although this occurred in 1662, this exchange illustrated the system of personal and political networks that characterized the Anglo-Algonquian frontier in southern New England throughout much of the seventeenth-century. Issues of land ownership, political subterfuge, diplomatic negotiations, and attempts by leaders like Cassacinamon, Uncas,

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<sup>18</sup> "Report of a Committee appointed to inquire respecting the Claims of Uncas to the Pequot Country; presented the Commissioners, at their Meeting in Boston, Sept. 1663," *Acts*, II: 379-380.

and others (both Algonquian and English) to legitimize their leadership and influence in the region produced a dynamic state of affairs. The Pequot War was the defining event for the tribe; the Pequots and Cassacinamon dealt with its effects throughout the seventeenth-century, and beyond. However, many of the conditions and strategies outlined in the 1662 episode are evident before the Pequot War took place. This chapter explores some of these strategies and themes, constructing a picture of the Pequots' world prior to 1637, where the Pequots' connections to their land and to their Algonquian neighbors ran deep.

## I

“People of the Shallow Waters.” “Pequats.” “Pequatoos.” “Pequots.”<sup>19</sup> Known by many names, the Pequots lived in southern New England long before the arrival of Europeans, and long before Robin Cassacinamon's birth sometime in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Over the centuries, the Pequots established deep connections to their environment and among their indigenous neighbors via a complex system of alliances, kin networks, and political strategies. Such tactics regulated the Pequots' interactions with their neighbors, as well as internally stabilized their own communities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>It appears that “People of the Shallow Waters” is the English translation of the Pequots' tribal name. The Pequots spoke a version of the Eastern Algonkian language that was common throughout Southern New England. “Pequats,” “Pequatoos” and “Pequots” are all spellings of the tribe's name in early European documents and maps. Adrien Block and Cornelis Doedtsz, *Untitled*, 1614; Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*, ca. 1635; Allison Lassieur, *The Pequot Tribe* (Mankato, MN: Bridgestone Books, 2002), 7; Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, “Mashantucket Pequot Nation Timeline,” <http://www.pequotmuseum.org/TribalHistory/TribalHistoryOverview/TimelineofEvents.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin A. McBride, interview by author, tape recording, Mashantucket, CT, July 2008. It is difficult to determine Robin Cassacinamon's exact date of birth. Cassacinamon first appears in the documentary evidence in the year 1638, following the Pequot War. The fact that he survived the war and the later purge of Pequot sachems suggests that he was young man at the time. For an in-depth exploration

Although his date of birth is unknown, the available evidence suggests that Cassacinamon grew up in the 1620s, and was a young man in 1637. Thus, Cassacinamon came of age in a world where Europeans made their first tentative steps into the region, and where the Algonquians of southern New England established their first links to them. As Cassacinamon grew older, Europeans moved from the peripheries of the Pequots' territory to their very doorstep, setting the stage for the Pequot War.

The Pequots' ties to their homeland were just one part of a lengthy human saga that connected a number of indigenous peoples to the area dubbed "New England" by English explorers. Human colonization of southern New England began some eleven to twelve thousand years ago, with the physical remains of homesteads, ceramics, and household goods serving as the silent testament to countless generations of indigenous habitation.<sup>21</sup> The Pequots made the Thames River drainage basin in Connecticut their home for centuries before the arrival of Europeans. Over time, the Pequots developed extensive cultural and linguistic ties to other Algonquian-speaking peoples in the region. While one must be wary of creating "a false impression of homogeneity and stasis among the Native people of southern New England," the existing evidence supports the notion that Pequot culture shared many characteristics with the other Algonquian peoples in the region.<sup>22</sup> These close ties with their neighbors suggest that the Pequots developed *in situ*

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of the political strategies used by seventeenth-century southern Algonquian sachems, see Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," vi, 1-26, 69-94, 164-182, 255.

<sup>21</sup>Dena F. Dincauze, "A Capsule Prehistory of Southern New England," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>22</sup>Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 136, and *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 204-211; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 20.

in southern New England. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous population of New England was estimated to be somewhere from one hundred fifty thousand to two hundred thousand individuals, with the Pequots comprising some 13,000 people.<sup>23</sup> The Pequots' original territory began near present-day New London, Connecticut, and stretched eastward to the present border of Connecticut and Rhode Island. From the sea coast, Pequot hegemony reached northward to the headwaters of the Thames River. By the seventeenth century, Pequot influence extended across Long Island Sound to the eastern end of Long Island, with several tribes under tributary status.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The Pequots had not, as was previously believed, migrated into the area from the Hudson Valley region of New York State. Extensive archaeological surveys and excavations sponsored by the tribe on the contemporary Mashantucket Pequot reservation support this lengthy connection to the land. Human beings occupied the land and utilized its resources from at least the Early Archaic Period (ca. 7000 BCE) through to the twenty-first century. While a direct line of descent cannot be drawn between those earliest human occupants and the Pequots, the available evidence suggests that the Pequots developed *in situ*. William A. Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *The Pequots of Southern New England, The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 33; John W. DeForest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut-From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, Connecticut: WM. Jas. Hamersley, 1851; reprint, Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1964), 59-61; Mary Guillette Soulsby, "Connecticut Indian Ethnohistory: A Look at Five Tribes," MA Thesis, University of Connecticut, 1981; Dean R. Snow, "Late Prehistory of the East Coast," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (hereafter *Handbook*) (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 65; Ives Goddard, "Eastern Algonquian Languages," *Handbook 15: 70-77*; Bert Salwen, "A Tentative 'In Situ' Solution to the Mohegan-Pequot Problem," *An Introduction to the Archaeology and History of the Connecticut Valley Indian*, ed. William R. Young (Springfield, IL: Springfield Museum of Science, 1969), 81-88; Oberg, *Uncas*, 16; Peter Thomas, *In the Maelstrom of Change: The Indian Trade and Cultural Process in the Middle Connecticut River Valley, 1635-1665* (Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 28.

<sup>24</sup> The Mashantucket reservation is located within the Pequots' traditional territory. Kevin McBride, "Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot, 1637-1900: A Preliminary Analysis" in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 106-109; Kevin McBride, "'Ancient and Crazy': Pequot Lifeways During the Historic Period" in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present*, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1991), 65; Dean R. Snow, *The Archaeology of New England* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 33; Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 33; Kevin McBride, "The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period," *Northeast Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, ed. Robert Steven Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 76.

The Pequots were “closely related, both culturally and linguistically,” to other Algonquian-speaking peoples in the region, including the Narragansetts and, especially, the Mohegans.<sup>25</sup> However, while the two shared ties of language and kinship, they lived in separate communities and developed their own distinctive ceramic styles, suggesting that the two were distinct groups for a significant period of time. Excavations at the Mystic Fort site, located on the west side of the Mystic River and now known as Pequot Hill, have uncovered these distinct Pequot ceramics, which are only found in late-sixteenth and early seventeenth century Native settlements in eastern Connecticut. These settlements were in the heart of the Pequots’ traditional territory. The Pequot style is easily distinguishable from the type found at Mohegan sites, a ceramic variety commonly known as Ft. Shantok, named after the principal settlement and base for the Mohegan sachem Uncas.<sup>26</sup>

The Algonquians of southern New England were, according to the early ethnographic reports of Europeans like Francis Higginson, a “tall and strong-limbed people.” William Wood observed that the Native people of Massachusetts were “between five or six foot high, straight bodied, strongly composed, smooth skinned, merry countenanced, of complexion something more swarthy than Spaniards, black-

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<sup>25</sup> The Pequots and the Mohegans spoke an almost identical variant of the Eastern Algonquin language known as Mohegan-Pequot. Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 33; DeForest, *History*, 59-61; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 44-53; Frank G. Speck and J. Dyneley Prince, eds., *A Vocabulary of Mohegan-Pequot* (Bristol, PA: Evolution Publishing, 1999), 1, 12, 81. Originally printed in J. Dyneley Prince and Frank G. Speck, “Glossary of the Mohegan-Pequot Language,” *American Anthropologist* 6: 1 (1904), 18-45.

<sup>26</sup> McBride, “Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots,” 99; McBride, “Prehistory fo the Lower Connecticut River Valley,”; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 45; Laurie Weinstein-Farson, “Land Politics and Power: The Mohegan Indians in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Man in the Northeast* 42 (1991), 14; Oberg, *Uncas*, 18.



haired, high foreheaded, black eyed, out-nosed, broad shouldered, brawny armed, long and slender handed, out breasted, small waisted, lank bellied, well thighed, flat kneed, handsom grown legs and small feet.” The type of clothing worn by New England Native peoples depended on the season. In fair weather, Wood noted that New England Natives wore very little, “saving for a pair of Indian breeches to cover that which modesty command to be hid, which is but a piece of cloth a yard and a half long, put between their groinings, tied with a snake’s skin about their middles.” During cold weather, many Native men and women wore “skins about them, in form of an Irish mantle, and of these some be bear’s skins, moose’s skins, and beaver skins sewed together, otter skins, and raccoon skins, most of them in winter having his deep-furred cat skin, like a long large muff, which he shifts to that arm which lieth most exposed to the wind.” Elderly tribal members often wore “leather drawers, in form of Irish trousers, fastened under their girdle with buttons.” Their shoes were also made of skins, “to cut of a moose’s hide.”<sup>27</sup>

The Pequots’ sacred world was dominated by many spirits, with two being particularly powerful. The creator, Cautantowwit or Kytan, resided in the southwest. According to Roger Williams, it was there where “the Court of their great God Cautantouwvit” was held and where “they [the Indians] goe themselves when they die” to spend the afterlife. Cautantowwit was not only a creator, he was a provider. Several southern New England Algonquian legends claimed that Cautantowwit sent a crow to bring them the first corn and bean plants. It was for this reason that the crow was treated

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<sup>27</sup>Francis Higginson, “New England’s Plantation,” in *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, from 1603-1636*, ed. Alexander Young (Boston, 1846), 256-257; William Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan (Amherst, MA: 1977), 82, 84; Oberg, *Uncas*, 20-21.

as one of many sacred animals, despite the fact that “they [the crows] do the come also some hurt.” While Cautantowwit was a benevolent force, the second was far more ambivalent, and thus the focus of much more concern. Known by a variety of names — Cheepi, Abbomocho, or Hobbomok — Cheepi sent the Pequots misfortunes like illness “for some conceived anger against them.” However, it was also Cheepi who could take those misfortunes away. It was Cheepi to whom they prayed “to cure their wounds and diseases.”<sup>28</sup>

In order to sustain their communities men and women invoked spiritual powers, known as *manitou*, through rituals designed to garner their favor. Manitou could be anything — people, animals, plants, objects, or events — felt to have “an immediate and pervasive power beyond and greater than that of [ordinary] humans.”<sup>29</sup> Rituals were the vehicle through which balance was maintained in the world, and it was the powwow (shaman) who performed the most important rituals. Powwows were religious figures who acted as intermediaries between the spiritual and physical worlds.<sup>30</sup> Powwows

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<sup>28</sup> Southern New England Algonquians lived in a world full of powerful spiritual forces. Spirits presided over just about everything in the world, including “corn, colors, directions, seasons, the heavenly bodies, fire, men, women, children, the house, and so forth.” Oral traditions spoke of an important cultural hero, named Wetucks or Maushop, who was “said to have waded far out to sea to hunt whales and large fish” and who shaped the regional landscape. Other legends spoke of the Little People, or Makiawisug, who lived in the surrounding forests and “who punished the selfish and miserly and rewarded the good.” William S. Simmons, “The Mystic Voice: Pequot Folklore from the Seventeenth Century to the Present” in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 143; Oberg, *Uncas*, 30-32; William S. Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 130; Higginson, “New England’s Plantation,” 257; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 35; Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, 100-01; Williams, *Key*, 86, 164, 199; John Joesselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New England* (Boston, 1865), 103; Edward Winslow’s “Relation” in *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth, from 1602 to 1625*, ed. Alexander Young (Boston, 1841), 356.

<sup>29</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 32-33.

<sup>30</sup>Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 43; Simmons, *Spirit*, 37-38, 41-45, 49-63, 189.

controlled guardian spirits, and these spirits took on a variety of animate and inanimate forms. They had access to tremendous power, and tribal leaders often consulted with their powwows when making vital decisions.<sup>31</sup> Another important religious figure in the community was the pniese. The pniese was an individual who had received a vision during a ritual ordeal, during which he/she experienced a transformation of consciousness. These individuals served as trusted counsels in decisions regarding war and peace.<sup>32</sup>

The first European explorers to New England frequently reported on the abundance of plant and animal life in the region. While all of the descriptions reflected the individual biases of the recorders, Thomas Morton summed up these European ideas most succinctly with his assertion that the region was “a paradise: for in mine eie t’was Natures Masterpeece,” and “if this Land be not rich, then is the whole world poore.”<sup>33</sup> Gabriel Archer noted in 1602 that Cape Cod was “full of wood, vines, Gooseberie bushes, Hurtberies, Rapices, Eglentine, &c.” In the early 1630s, Francis Higginson reported on the great “store of pumpions, cowcubmers, and other things of that nature which I know not” that seemed to burst forth from the Massachusetts coast. Higginson continued with his report, and noted how all of the “excellent pot-herbs grow abundantly among the grass, as strawberry leaves in all places of the country, and plenty of strawberries in their time, and penny-royal, winter savory, sorrel, brooklime, liverwort,

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<sup>31</sup>Powwows were believed to direct spirits to heal their friends, afflict their enemies with injury or illness, see into the future, and perform other incredible feats of magic. Simmons, “Pequot Folklore,” 143; Oberg, *Uncas*, 32; William S. Simmons, *Cautantowwit’s House: An Indian Burial Ground on the Island of Conanicut in Narragansett Bay* (Providence: 1970), 53; Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, 101.

<sup>32</sup>Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 43; Simmons, *Spirit*, 39-41.

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Morton, *New English Canann*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, *Publications of the Prince Society*, vol. 14 (Boston, 1883), 180; Oberg, *Uncas*, 15.

carvel, and watercress; Also leeks and onions are ordinary, and divers physical herbs.” Forests were filled “with excellent good timer,” and served as the habitat for bears, “severall sorts of Deere,” “Wolves, Foxes, Beavers, Oters, Martins, great wilde Cats,” and moose, a “great beast...as bigge as an Oxe.”<sup>34</sup> Early European maps, such as Willem Blaeu’s 1635 *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*, sometimes included artistic representations of these animals, such as deer, bears, and others. These representations were as detailed as the cartographic depictions of the New England coastline, and they served as a visual testament to the seeming abundance of the land.<sup>35</sup>

Southern New England was not a paradise where the indigenous inhabitants lived in harmony with the natural world. The Pequots and their Algonquian neighbors engaged in a wide variety of subsistence activities that allowed them to take full advantage of their environment’s potential. Indigenous people did not own the land in the proprietary manner of the later English colonists. Instead, Native communities claimed the use of the land and the things that were on it. They were, according to Roger Williams, very particular about their claims; he noted that “the Natives are very exact and punctuall in the bounds of their lands, belonging to this or that Prince or People.” Families planted crops, fished in the rivers, hunted in the forests, and gathered wood for their fires and building materials, but when they were finished others could use the land.<sup>36</sup> By the early

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<sup>34</sup>Gabriel Archer, “Account of Gosnold’s Voyage,” in *The English New England Voyages, 1602-1608*, ed. David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn (London, 1983), 124-25; Higginson, “New England’s Plantation,” 246-47; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 180; Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, 36-38; Oberg, *Uncas*, 15.

<sup>35</sup>Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*.

<sup>36</sup>Roger Williams, *A Key Into the Language of America* (London: Gregory Dextor, 1643); Fifth Edition (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Gryphon Books, 1971), 167; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*:

seventeenth century, the Pequots were firmly involved in a mixed maritime and horticultural subsistence economy.<sup>37</sup> The tribes' extensive use of the estuaries, lakes, streams, tidal marshes, and forests that filled their territory, as well as their close proximity to the ocean, may perhaps be the reason the Pequots' identified themselves as the "People of the Shallow Waters." Seasonal rotation between these different subsistence bases meant that the Pequots reduced any potential strains they placed on local food sources. Thus, the Pequots participated in a constant seasonal round of activities that shaped the environment for their own benefit.<sup>38</sup>

By 1300 CE, the Algonquian peoples living along the rivers, estuaries, and coastal environments of southern New England had fully incorporated agriculture into their

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*Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 62, 65; Oberg, *Uncas*, 20; Bragdon, *Native People*, 136; Laurie Lee Weinstein, "The Dynamics of Seventeenth Century Wampanoag Land Relations: The Ethnohistorical Evidence for Locational Change," *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society* 46 (1984), 22.

<sup>37</sup> McBride, "Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot," 106-109; McBride, "'Ancient and Crazie': Pequot Lifeways During the Historic Period," 65; Starna, "The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 34-35; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 37-38; Froelich G. Rainey, "A Compilation of Historical Data Contributing to the Ethnography of Connecticut and Southern New England Indians," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 3: 1 (1956), 1-89; Charles C. Wiloughby, "Houses and Gardens of the New England Indians," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 8 (1906), 115-122; E.B. De Labarre and H. Wilder, "Indian Cornhills in Massachusetts," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 22: 3 (1920), 203-225; Bert Salwen, "Indians of Southern New England and Long Island Sound: Early Period," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (hereafter *Handbook*) (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 160-176; William S. Simmons, "Narragansett," *Handbook* 15: 190-197; William C. Sturtevant, "Two 1761 Wigwams at Niantic, Connecticut," *American Antiquity* 40:4 (1975), 437-444; Peter A. Thomas, "Contrastive Subsistence Strategies and Land Use as Factors for Understanding Indian-White Relations in New England," *Ethnohistory* 23:1 (1976), 1-18.

<sup>38</sup> Pequot villagers exploited the diverse wild plants in New England, which varied with season and locality. These plants added not only nutritional value to Native diets, but enhanced the flavors of Native dishes. During the summer months they collected strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, elderberries, currants, and other wild fruits. The fall provided walnuts, acorns, hickory nuts, chestnuts, and butternuts, all of which could be dried or roasted and then stored for use throughout the cold New England winter. While edible roots and tubers were apparently collected all year round, archaeological and ethnographic evidence suggests that the majority of them were a winter resource. Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 35-36; Warner, "The Foods of the Connecticut Indians," *Bulletin* 37: 27-47; Butler, "Algonkian Culture and the Use of Maize in Southern New England," *Bulletin* 22: 3-39; McBride, "Prehistory of the Lower Connecticut River Valley," Ph.D. diss.; Cronon, *Changes*, 45-48.

subsistence activities. Agriculture provided the major contributions to southern New England Native diets — anywhere from one-half to two-thirds — and cultivated fields of corn, beans, and squash were spread across the landscape next to Pequot settlements. Gardening tools were commonly made from animal bones, large shells, and turtle carapaces. Maize cultivation fostered a settlement pattern of “tethered mobility” as the Pequots became tied to their villages and fields for much of the year, yet were still dependent on the fruits of their seasonal subsistence patterns.<sup>39</sup>

A typical agricultural plot was prepared in March by cutting down and burning any existing trees and brush, with the ashes adding needed nutrients to the soil. While men and women participated in the clearing of farm land, a sexual division of labor was the norm. Farming was by and large the primary responsibility of women; as a centralized activity near their homes, it was possible for women to tend to both their fields and their child-care duties. The only crop that men raised was tobacco for ceremonial purposes. After a plot of land was cleared, Pequot women began the work of planting. William Pynchon observed that this occurred during “Squanikesos: part of Aprill and pt of May, when they set Indian corne.”<sup>40</sup> The women shaped tiny mounds out

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<sup>39</sup>Michael Heckenberger, James B. Petersen, and Nancy Asch Sidell, “Early Evidence of Maize Agriculture in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont,” *Archaeology of Eastern North America* 20 (1992), 144; McBride, “Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot,” 106-109; McBride, ““Ancient and Crazie”: Pequot Lifeways During the Historic Period,” 65; Starna, “The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 34-35; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 37-38, 44; Rainey, “A Compilation of Historical Data,” *Bulletin* 3: 1, 1-89; Oberg, *Uncas*, 26-27; Wiloughby, “Houses and Gardens of the New England Indians,” 115-122; De Labarre and Wilder, “Indian Cornhills in Massachusetts,” *American Anthropologist*, 203-225; Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England and Long Island Sound: Early Period,” *Handbook*, 15: 160-176; Simmons, “Narragansett,” *Handbook* 15: 190-197; Sturtevant, “Two 1761 Wigwams at Niantic, Connecticut,” *American Antiquity* 40:4, 437-444; Thomas, “Contrastive Subsistence Strategies and Land Use,” *Ethnohistory* 23:1, 1-18.

of the soil and placed the corn kernels inside them, with each mound spaced four to five feet apart. The spaces between the mounds were used for the planting of different types of squash, gourds, artichokes, cucumbers, and other plants. As the corn stalk grew, bean seeds were added to the mounds; the bean vines used the stalk as a stabilizing pole. All of the plants grew together in a symbiotic relationship, although European observers thought that Indian fields looked disorderly. Culturally determined notions of order aside, Pequot fields were extremely productive.<sup>41</sup>

Native women worked throughout the spring and early summer tending the fields to keep them free of weeds and pests. Roger Williams noted that the Narragansetts, a neighbor and rival tribe of the Pequots, built “little watch-houses in the middle of their fields, in which they, or their biggest children lodge, and earely in the morning prevent the birds” from feeding on the crops. At the end of the summer and in early fall, the women prepared for the harvest, and gathered “all the corne, and Fruites of the field.” Surplus crops were stored in large, grass-lined earthen pits. Thomas Morton, in his observations of New England indigenous life, identified these storage pits as “Barnes”

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<sup>40</sup>Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England,” 163; Rainey, “Historicla Data,” 10; Eva L. Butler, “Algonkian Culture and the use of Maize in Southern New England,” *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 22 (1948), 34; Pynchon quoted in Peter A. Thomas, *In the Maelstrom of Change: The Indian Trade and Cultural Process in the Middle Connecticut Valley, 1635-1665* (New York, 1990), 96.

<sup>41</sup>McBride, “Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot,” 106-109; McBride, ““Ancient and Crazie”: Pequot Lifeways During the Historic Period,” 65; Starna, “The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 34-35; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 37-38, 44; Rainey, “A Compilation of Historical Data,” *Bulletin* 3: 1, 1-89; Wiloughby, “Houses and Gardens of the New England Indians,” 115-122; De Labarre and Wilder, “Indian Cornhills in Massachusetts,” *American Anthropologist*, 203-225; Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England and Long Island Sound: Early Period,” *Handbook*, 15: 160-176; Simmons, “Narragansett,” *Handbook* 15: 190-197; Sturtevant, “Two 1761 Wigwams at Niantic, Connecticut,” *American Antiquity* 40:4, 437-444; Peter A. Thomas, “Contrastive Subsistence Strategies and Land Use,” *Ethnohistory* 23:1, 1-18.

that could “hold a Hogshead of corne apeece in them.”<sup>42</sup> Around harvest time, when the crops had been brought in and many kinds of wild plants gathered, the Pequots and their Algonquian neighbors held their largest festivals. At these gatherings, Pequot men and women ate, danced, gave up offerings of thanksgiving, and reaffirmed social, political, and cultural ties.<sup>43</sup>

When the soil was exhausted, fields were left to lie fallow. As the forest reclaimed the area, nutrients returned to the soil so that the farming cycle could start again. However, even empty fields served a useful purpose for the tribe. As forest vegetation expanded into the fields, several types of animals foraged through them looking for food. Pequot hunters then brought down those animals for their meat, bones, and fur, which were all put to good use as food, tools, and clothing.<sup>44</sup>

While the tending of domesticated plants was the domain of women, hunting and fishing was the province of Pequot men. Pequot men hunted for a diverse array of New England animals and fowl, although deer were the favorite target of New England Algonquian hunting parties.<sup>45</sup> Hunters were “very tender of their Traps, where they lie, and what comes at them; for they say, the Deere (whom they conceive have a Divine Power in them) will soone smell and be gone.” Rituals were performed to ensure a

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<sup>42</sup>Williams, *Key*, 170; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 30; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 44; Oberg, *Uncas*, 27-28; Starna, “The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 34-35.

<sup>43</sup>Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 46; Thomas, “Contrastive Subsistence Strategies,” 10; Oberg, *Uncas*, 28.

<sup>44</sup>Cronon, *Changes*, 42, 44, 51.

<sup>45</sup>The animals hunted included white-tailed deer, beaver, bear, raccoon, eastern cottontail rabbits, opossum, gray squirrel, porcupine, gray fox, weasel/mink, muskrat, meadow vole, and deer mouse. Pequot hunters also stalked turkey, duck, Canada goose, and other fowl.



successful hunt.<sup>46</sup> The oceans, rivers, and estuaries also provided vital subsistence for the Pequots.<sup>47</sup> Fishing was a vital subsistence activity that provided an important food source. The site where Cassacinamon's group of Pequots settled after the Pequot War, and that later became New London, Connecticut, and was called "Nameag." "Nameag" meant "the fishing place" in the Pequot-Mohegan language.<sup>48</sup>

Pequot men taught boys the skills they needed for the hunt. While large-scale communal hunts of two-to-three hundred warriors may have happened occasionally, small hunting parties, comprised of only a few warriors or individuals from a single family, seemed to be the norm.<sup>49</sup> During the hunt, William Wood observed that the men built "hunting houses" in areas "where they know the deer usually doth frequent." Pequot hunters remained in these lodges for considerable lengths of time, stalking their prey or setting up snares or traps to catch their quarry. After the men brought down the

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<sup>46</sup>Williams, *Key*, 132, 191, 225; Oberg, *Uncas*, 33; For works that explore Indians-animal relationships, see Calvin Luther Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley, CA: 1978) and *The Way of the Human Being* (New Haven, CT: 1999). See also *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade: A Critique of 'Keepers of the Game,'* ed. J. Shepard Krech III (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981) and J. Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: 2000).

<sup>47</sup>The Pequots took Atlantic sturgeon, salmon, striped bass, scup, tautog, and other fish, they hunted gray and harbor seals, and they collected a wide variety of shellfish (bay scallop, quahog, whelk, long clam, Virginia oyster). Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 35; Cf. Frederic W. Warner, "The Foods of the Connecticut Indians," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 37 (1972), 27-47; Eva L. Butler, "Algonkian Culture and the Use of Maize in Southern New England," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 22 (1948), 3-39; Kevin McBride, "Prehistory of the Lower Connecticut River Valley," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1984; Cronon, *Changes*, 45-47' Kevin A. McBride, "Transformation by Degree: Eighteenth Century Native American Land Use," *Eighteenth Century Native Communities of Southern New England in the Colonial Context*, ed. Jack Campisi, (Windsor, CT: The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, 2005), 48.

<sup>48</sup>Morton, *New English Canaan*, 20; Kevin A. McBride and Nicholas F. Bellatoni, "The Utility of Ethnohistorical Models for Understanding Late Woodland Contact Change in Southern New England," *Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut* 45 (1982), 52-53; Oberg, *Uncas*, 27-28.

<sup>49</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 28.

game, the women would take the animals back to camp to smoke the meat and dress the hides.<sup>50</sup>

Excavations at Mashantucket have identified several small seasonal hunting and gathering camps that date prior to the Pequots' permanent occupation of the reservation in the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These sites lend support to an idea put forward in the primary documents; prior to 1637, the Pequots used Mashantucket mainly as a hunting ground. The cedar swamp located at the center of Mashantucket was referred to as Ohomowauke ("owl's nest") and Cuppacommock ("refuge or hiding place"), place names that suggest the seasonal nature and purpose of the area.<sup>51</sup>

Robin Cassacinamon participated in these hunts as a boy, although it cannot be determined whether he hunted specifically at Mashantucket. Cassacinamon reminisced about these childhood activities much later in life during those diplomatic negotiations in August 1662. At the meeting Cassacinamon, Wesawegun (another Pequot sachem), and the Mohegan sachem Uncas drew up a map in the presence of English officials describing the Pequot territory before the War of 1637 and the area bordering the Narragansett territory. According to the English interpreter, Cassacinamon mentioned that as a boy he

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<sup>50</sup>Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 106; Thomas, "Contrastive Subsistence Strategies," 10; Salwen, "Indians of Southern New England," 161-62; Williams, *Key*, 128; Oberg, *Uncas*, 28-29.

<sup>51</sup> Hunting provided a crucial source of vitamins and protein throughout the year, but it was especially crucial during the late fall and winter months when the animals were at their fattest, wild plants were difficult to obtain, and villages lived on stored cultivated crops. Glenn W. LaFantasie, ed., *The Correspondence of Roger Williams, 1629-1653*, 2 vols. (Hanover, NH: Brown University Press/University Press of New England, 1988), 1: 74; McBride, "'Ancient and Crazie': Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period," 66; Cronon, *Changes*, 45-47.

would often hunt deer near a pond that the Pequots called Muxquota, at the eastern end of the Pequots' traditional territory.<sup>52</sup>

Subsistence was only one aspect of Pequot community life. The village served as the basic social and political unit for the Pequots and other New England Indian communities.<sup>53</sup> These villages exercised a degree of autonomy in their political and social relationships. According to anthropologist Eric Spencer Johnson, individuals and entire communities practiced “fluidity of affiliation.” This allowed for individuals to move, should the need arise, among communities “based upon that individual’s personal or familial network of kin and allies.” Communities could shift their political allies as well, often using similar networks of allies and relations. However, in response to the demands and changes wrought by European contact, villages gathered together into hierarchical chiefdoms. Even within these new arrangements, the composition of these “tribes” remained fluid, as members shifted their allegiance from one community to another with little difficulty.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>“New London, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1662, Plan of the Pequot Country and Testimony of Uncas, Cassasinamon, and Wesawegun,” in *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England-Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England, 1653-1679*, Vol. II (Boston: William White, 1859). Reprint in Volume 10 of *Plymouth Colony Record* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 450. Also found in the *Massachusetts Archives*, Vol. 30. 113; Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 35; Cronon, *Changes*, 47.

<sup>53</sup>While only a few contemporary written accounts exist that describe Pequot settlements in the early seventeenth century, a plausible model for Pequot settlement can be constructed by combining those records with archaeological evidence and ethnographic data gathered from other indigenous groups in the region. Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 37; McBride, “Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot,” 101; McBride, “Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” 65; Letter of Israel Stoughton to John Winthrop, July 1637, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (1918), 285; Thomas, *Maelstrom*, 29-44.

<sup>54</sup>Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England,” 166; Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 43; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: 1986), 41; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 41-42, 84-85; Peter A. Thomas, “Bridging the Cultural Gap: Indian/White Relations,” in *Early Settlement in the Connecticut*

Pequot villages appear to have been organized around specific lineages or smaller groups of extended families, with patrilineality being the general, but not exclusive, rule.<sup>55</sup> Settlements were dispersed and varied in size, purpose, and scope. Villagers adopted a semi-sedentary lifestyle geared toward meeting the demands of their seasonal subsistence activities; houses had to conform to this lifestyle. This mobility also provided a political strategy for Pequot communities, as it allowed for the fluidity of affiliation that Johnson described. Smaller settlements, ranging in size from villages of twenty to thirty dwellings to hamlets of three to five dwellings, appear to have been the norm. Pre-contact and early seventeenth century Pequot villages were constructed primarily in estuarine environments, namely along the Thames River, the Mystic River, and Poquetannuck Cove. Large agricultural fields — some as large as 200 acres — were located next to the settlements.<sup>56</sup>

The most common type of domicile in Pequot villages was the wigwam, which housed both nuclear or extended families depending on size. Wigwams were round with circular floor plans between 10 to 16 feet in diameter.<sup>57</sup> A framework made of saplings was fixed into the ground, with the poles then bent and bound to create a dome-shaped structure approximately six to ten feet high. The domed frame was then covered with

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*Valley*, ed. Stephen Innes (Deerfield, MA: 1984), 5; Paul Alden Robinson, “The Struggle Within: The Indian Debate in Seventeenth Century Narragansett Country” (PhD dissertation, SUNY Binghamton, 1990), 48-49; Oberg, *Uncas*, 22.

<sup>55</sup>McBride, “Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” 65-66; Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 39.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 84, 87, 255.

<sup>57</sup>Some eighteenth century Pequot wigwams were seventeen by twelve feet and fourteen by nine feet in diameter. Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 37-38; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 246, 249-251.

bark sheets or woven mats constructed out of rushes, cattails, or flag leaves. These houses served as the perfect accompaniment to the Pequots' semi-sedentary lifestyle, for they could be easily and quickly built, taken down, and then reconstructed in a new location.<sup>58</sup>

However, two Pequot settlements from the early seventeenth century are noteworthy because they do not fit into the typical settlement pattern. These villages — the Fort Hill and Mystic sites — each contained thirty to seventy wigwams, were built on strategic hilltop locations, and were surrounded by fortifications. The hills on which the villages were built were a considerable distance away from the customary estuary environments, a characteristic that separated the two settlements from other Pequot towns. No pre-contact Pequot villages have been found in similar locations. The fortifications, increased size, and defensive positions of these two villages suggest that settlements of this type in southern New England were likely a result of European contact.<sup>59</sup>

Pequot society, like that of other indigenous groups in southern New England, was ranked, though not stratified. Rank was communicated in a variety of ways, including jewelry and other adornments. Men and women wore “pendants in their ears, as forms of birds, beasts and fishes, carved out of bone, shells and stone.” European observers also noted that “many of the better sort” decorated their bodies with tattoos, painting, and scarring, symbols which commemorated “certain portraitures of beasts, as

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>McBride, “Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots,” 101-103; McBride, “Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” 65; McBride, “Prehistory of the Lower Connecticut River Valley”; De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, 133.

bears, deers, mooses, wolves, etc; some of fowls, as of eagles, hawks, etc.”

Ornamentation conveyed social status within the Native community, as well as contact the person shared with powerful spiritual forces.<sup>60</sup>

While the Pequots did not face the rigid and fixed classes that divided European society, high-status positions still existed within the tribe. These positions were either inherited or earned through public recognition of skill and achievement. Land ownership, descent, and residence, especially for these families of high social status, were primarily patrilineal. However, Pequot society also recognized bilateral kin groups, from both the father’s and the mother’s family. Because of this, it was not unheard of for titles, land claims, or inheritances to pass down through families via the female line. In fact, the ties to both patrilineal and matrilineal kin connected sachems to “the homelands they presided over and the people they led.”<sup>61</sup> The bonds between the Pequots and their neighbors were strengthened through marriages that connected the powerful families and sachems of each group. These families held the hereditary titles for the sachems, and prominent families of different tribes cemented alliances and strengthened territorial claims through marriage. One of these attempts at a political marriage pushed the Mohegan sachem Uncas into conflict with the Pequots in the 1630s.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, 83-85; Williams, *Key*, 185; Bragdon, *Native People*, 173; Oberg, *Uncas*, 21.

<sup>61</sup>Starna, “Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” 39, 41; McBride, “Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” 65-66; Morton H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society* (New York: Random House, 1967); Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Stratification* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 21; Oberg, *Uncas*, 22.

<sup>62</sup>Alfred A. Cave, “The Pequot Invasion of Southern New England: A Reassessment of the Evidence,” *New England Quarterly* Vol. 62, (March 1989): 42.

The most important high-status political position among the Pequots was that of the sachem. The sachemship was a civil position, and, depending on the size of the village or the number of lineages and kin groups present, one or two sachems could be appointed. There appear to have been different levels of status among sachems, with some being more prestigious than others, and a principal sachem at the head of Algonquian confederations. It was the responsibility of the sachem to maintain balance and order within the community, weigh the stability of tribal interests against the autonomy of local settlements, and negotiate relationships with outsiders.<sup>63</sup> A sachemship was inherited, passed along patrilineal lines, although there were instances of sachemships being given to women. This patrilineal pattern of inheritance, combined with the fact that grand sachems typically possessed higher status than other sachems, convinced Europeans that Natives had a monarchical system similar to the ones that existed in Europe.<sup>64</sup> William Wood believed that while a sachem had “no kingly robes to make him glorious in the view of his subjects, nor daily guards to secure his person, or court-like attendance, nor sumptuous palaces,” his followers still “yield all submissive subjection to him, accounting him their sovereign, going at his command and coming at his beck.”<sup>65</sup>

The truth was that the socio-political position of the sachem was uniquely Native American. Although a man gained access to a sachemship through heredity, “the

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<sup>63</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 153-54; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 71-77, 91-93; Oberg, *Uncas*, 23; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 112-115.

<sup>64</sup>Roger Williams, *A Key Into the Language of America* (London: Gregory Dextor, 1643); Fifth Edition (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Gryphon Books, 1971), 140; McBride, “Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequot,” 102-103.

<sup>65</sup>Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 97-98.

authority which accompanied that dignity depended, for amount, very much on his own abilities.”<sup>66</sup> The sachem may have received authority and tributary wealth due to his lineage, but if he intended to keep that position, a sachem had to *earn* the respect and loyalty of his people. While sachems took on the daily tasks of leadership, their authority was not absolute. Pequot government, like that of other southern New England Algonquians, appears to have been a highly consensual, village-oriented affair. Roger Williams observed that sachems “will not conclude of ought that concerns all, either Lawes, or Subsidies, or warres, unto which the people are averse, and by gentle perswasion cannot be brought.” Sachems seldom acted on “any weighty matter without the consent of his great men,” receiving advice from other high-ranking individuals in the community, such as elders, warriors, clan leaders, and religious authorities. If a sachem acted in “harsh dealing” with his people, according to Daniel Gookin, villagers would “go live under other sachems that can protect them.” This interdependent relationship ensured that sachems tried “to carry it obligingly and lovingly unto their people, lest they should desert them, and thereby their strength, power, and tribute would be diminished.”<sup>67</sup>

Preserving the social order was an important responsibility of the sachem; it reduced the chance that villagers would seek vengeance on their own, thus tearing the

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<sup>66</sup>John W. DeForest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut-From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, Connecticut: WM. Jas. Hamersley, 1851; reprint, Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1964) , 31; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 39, 71-77.

<sup>67</sup>Williams, *Key*, 202; Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* (1674; reprint, New York, 1970), 20; Oberg, *Uncas*, 22-23; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 69-93.



community apart.<sup>68</sup> Sachems also oversaw matters of peace and war. They entertained guests who visited their towns, and conducted diplomatic negotiations that were sealed via the ritual exchange of gifts. They led war parties against their enemies to capture prisoners, exert their authority over tributary villages, and gain status through acts of bravery. Thus, the sachem bore the responsibility of maintaining balance both within the community and with the outside world.<sup>69</sup>

Sachems also fulfilled economic, as well as political, roles. They distributed land rights to their followers and decided how those lands were used. Sachems also supervised trade relationships within the community and across long-distance trading networks.<sup>70</sup> For their leadership, sachems received tribute payments from their followers. Corn was a popular tribute item throughout the Eastern Woodlands. Once a year, according to Pilgrim founder Edward Winslow, a sachem's closest advisors "provoke the people to bestow much corn on the sachim. To that end, they appoint a certain time and place, near the sachim's dwelling, where the people bring many baskets of corn, and make a great stack thereof."<sup>71</sup> Another popular tribute item was wampum. Wampum consisted of small, tubular white and purple beads made from quahog (hard-shell clam)

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<sup>68</sup> Sachems acted as judges; they settled disputes among their followers, meted out punishments, and dispensed justice. Williams, *Key*, 203; Oberg, *Uncas*, 24; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 187; Bragdon, *Native People*, 145.

<sup>69</sup>Williams, *Key*, 104; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 187; Oberg, *Uncas*, 24.

<sup>70</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 23; Simmons, *Spirit*, 12-13; Salwen, "Indians of Southern New England," 166; Bragdon, *Native People*, 91, 121, 146; Kenneth Feder, "Of Stone and Metal: Trade and Warfare in Southern New England," *New England Social Studies Bulletin* 44 (1986), 26-41.

<sup>71</sup>Gookin, *Historical Collections*, 18; Edward Winslow's "Relation" in *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth, from 1602 to 1625*, ed. Alexander Young (Boston, 1841), 362; Bragdon, *Native People*; Stephen R. Potter, *Commoners, Tribute, and Chiefs: The Development of Algonquian Culture in the Potomac Valley* (Charlottesville, VA: 1993), 149-174; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 77-79; Oberg, *Uncas*, 23.

shells, as well as whelk or conch shells, which were harvested from the coast of Long Island Sound. Wampum served a ceremonial purpose throughout the Native northeastern woodlands. Wampum was worn as ornamentation, but it was perhaps best known for being strung together into belts that were used to pay tribute, pay ransoms, provide compensation or restitution for crimes, and commemorate treaty negotiations and political arrangements.<sup>72</sup>

While sachems received substantial tribute payments which enhanced their social status and allowed them to live in great comfort, they were expected to redistribute much of those payments to their followers. A sachem earned the trust of the community through their use of persuasion, their skill, and by operating within a system of reciprocal gift exchanges.<sup>73</sup> The ritual exchange of gifts, as well as games of chance, redistributed this wealth and cemented these relationships. This system of reciprocity was the cornerstone of the political and social relationship between sachems and their communities. A Pequot sachem entered into a social contract when he (and sometimes she) accepted a tribute from the community. The sachem then granted the gift-giver a request. Sachems fulfilled their part of the social contract by making decisions that

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<sup>72</sup>Frank G. Speck, "The Functions of Wampum among the Eastern Algonkin," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 6 (1919), 56; J.S. Slotkin and Karl Schmitt, "Studies of Wampum," *American Anthropologist* 51 (April-June 1949), 223-236; Peter A. Thomas, "The Fur Trade, Indian Land, and the Need to Define Adequate Environmental Parameters," *Ethnohistory* 28 (1981), 363; Elizabeth Shapiro Peña, "Wampum Production in New Netherland and Colonial New York: The Historical Archaeological Context" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1990), 21-23; Michael Oberg, *Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 96; Oberg, *Uncas*, 23.

<sup>73</sup>Williams, *Key*, 142; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 77-79; Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 41-43.

benefited the petitioner and the community as a whole. The sachem-tributary relationship was thus a conditional one.<sup>74</sup>

The largest disruption to New England Indian life in the early seventeenth century, as was true throughout the Americas, came from European-introduced diseases. Pre-contact New England was believed to be a healthy environment, although it was not disease-free.<sup>75</sup> Yet none of the existing indigenous maladies caused the widespread death and social dislocation that European pathogens caused. Communicable diseases like smallpox, measles, chicken pox, whooping cough, scarlet fever, cholera, diphtheria, plague, and others swept through the continent.<sup>76</sup> The indigenous people of southern New England quickly fell to these new diseases, having no real immunities against them. In fact, some Native medicinal practices, such as the use of sweat baths to purge the illness out, helped spread European pathogens and dehydrated those who were already

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<sup>74</sup>Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 42-43; Oberg, *Uncas*, 24; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 78-79; Jennings, *Invasion*, 105-127. In Chapter Seven of *Invasion of America*, Francis Jennings addresses this system of alliances, kinship, leadership, and the role of the sachems in those processes. However, Jennings asserts that this system devolves into a one of vassalage once Europeans assert dominance in the region. Jennings work holds a place as a landmark study in the field in the historiography of Early American history. While *Invasion* serves as an essential "corrective" work in the field, in his commitment to show how brutally Native peoples were treated, he at times downplays their agency at the time. Eric Spencer Johnson, writing his dissertation in the 1990s with the benefit of an additional twenty years of historical scholarship, centers these tactics as Native political strategies in the seventeenth century.

<sup>75</sup>Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 44; Marshall T. Newman, "Aboriginal New World Epidemiology and Medical Care, and the Impact of Old World Disease Imports," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 45: 3, pt. 2 (1976), 669.

<sup>76</sup>Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*, 84-85; Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 45-46; Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 86-87; Snow, *The Archaeology of New England*; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 30; Sherburne F. Cook, "The Significance of Disease in the Extinction of the New England Indians," *Human Biology* 45: 3 (1973), 485-508; Sherburne F. Cook, "Interracial Warfare and Population Decline among the New England Indians," *Ethnohistory* 20: 3 (1972), 1-24; Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 33 (1976), 300.

sick. While there is no way to be sure, scholars estimate that the mortality rates ranged from as low as 55 percent to as high 95 percent in some areas. These “virgin soil epidemics” ensured that by the time Europeans established a permanent colonial presence in the region, much of New England had become a “widowed land.”<sup>77</sup>

While localized outbreaks of communicable disease happened sporadically throughout this period of contact between Indians and whites, two outbreaks served “benchmarks” in the history of the New England Anglo-Algonquian frontier. The first was an outbreak of hepatitis that ravaged the Atlantic coast of New England from the Kennebec River in Maine south to Narragansett Bay between 1616 and 1619. Hepatitis was introduced to eastern Algonquian populations by European fisherman who visited the region to fish and trade. Among the Wampanoags and the Massachusetts mortality rates reached as high as 90 percent. This epidemic allowed the early English colony of Plymouth to gain a foothold in New England in 1620; the colonists built their town on the site of a previous indigenous settlement whose inhabitants had died in the outbreak.<sup>78</sup>

The Pequots were spared the worst of the 1616-1619 outbreak as it stopped short of their territory. However, the Pequots were not lucky a second time. In 1633, smallpox struck the tribe. No place was safe; the disease swept over the entire region. John Winthrop, governor of the Puritan English colony of Massachusetts Bay, wrote in 1634 that “for the natives in these parts, Gods hand hath so pursued them, as for 300 miles space, [that] the greatest parte of them are swept away by the small poxe, which still

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> In 1622, Robert Cushman of Plymouth noted this “widowed” state, and said that “wee found the place where we live emptie, the people being all dead & gone away, and none living neere 8 or 10. myles.” Ibid.; Arthur E. Speiss and Bruce D. Weiss, “New England Pandemic of 1616-1622: Cause and Archaeological Implication,” *Man in the Northeast* 34 (1987), 71-72; Robert Cushman, *A Sermon Preached at Plymouth in New England, December 9, 1621* (London, 1622), A4.

continues among them.”<sup>79</sup> The Pequot population, originally thought to be around thirteen thousand, plummeted to about 3,000 people in 1634, a mortality rate of seventy-seven percent. It dropped again after 1637, to a post-war population of around 1,000 people.<sup>80</sup>

The tribe suffered greatly, and not only in demographic terms. The tremendous loss of life disrupted all levels of Pequot society. Affected communities could no longer meet the daily tasks needed to complete the basic requirements of life. Social chaos ensued as elders died taking their knowledge with them, fertility rates dropped, and children were left orphaned with few surviving kin to take them in.<sup>81</sup>

## II

Even with their diminished population, the Pequots posed a significant challenge to both European expansion and to the ambitions of their Native rivals well into the 1630s. New communities formed out of the ashes of old ones, as survivors banded together and set upon the process of rebuilding their lives. The high mortality rates may have also presented gifted and ambitious Pequots new opportunities for leadership. Despite the demographic decline wrought by epidemic disease, the Pequots extended their political and territorial spheres of influence along the Connecticut River Valley and eastern Long Island during the late 1620s and early 1630s. This expansion enabled the Pequots to place several smaller wampum-producing tribes under tributary status. Their new found hegemony in the region allowed the Pequots to grow “rich and potent” via the

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<sup>79</sup>John Winthrop to Sir Simon D’Ewes, July 21, 1634, and Winthrop to Sir Nathaniel Rich, May 22, 1634, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 171-72, 167; Jennings, *Invasion*, chapter 2.

<sup>80</sup>Snow, *The Archaeology of New England*, 34 and 39.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

wampum trade, and it gave them premier access to European trade goods coming out of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands.<sup>82</sup>

The Dutch were the Pequots' first verifiable European contact, and that interaction set in motion events that propelled the Pequots forward as a major regional power. In 1613-1614, Dutch merchant Adriaen Block and his crew explored Long Island Sound and the Thames River. During this exploration, the Dutch sailors in Block's party encountered the "Pequatoos" living along a small river which the Dutch named "the river of Seccanamos after the name of the Sagmos or Sacmos [Sagamore]." Block and his men also traded with another group of Natives on this trip "who are called Morhicans."<sup>83</sup> Despite that initial meeting, the Pequots did not maintain sustained contact Europeans until the early 1620s. In 1622, Dutch trader Jaques Elekes traveled to the mouth of the Thames River and visited a Pequot village. The details of this meeting are sketchy, but at some point relations between Elekes's party and the village broke down. Elekes then seized the sachem and announced that "his [the sachem's] head would be cut off" unless the Pequots paid a hefty ransom. The Pequots paid "forty fathoms" of "small beads which they [the Pequots] manufacture themselves and prize as jewells." Elekes released

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<sup>82</sup>Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 80-81; William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. William T. Davis (New York: 1920), 235; Lynn Ceci, *The Effect of European Contact and Trade on the Settlement Patterns in Coastal New York, 1524-1665* (New York: 1990), 208-09; Alfred E. Cave, "Who Killed John Stone? A Note on the Origins of the Pequot War," *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 49 (1992), 512; Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 46-47; Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*, 97.

<sup>83</sup>J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 42-43; Oberg, *Uncas*, 36; Starna, "Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 34; Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 197; Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 33-34; Adrien Block and Cornelis Doedtsz, *Untitled*, 1614, MSS 254; Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*, ca. 1635, MSS 26. Copies of the maps are housed in the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center archives. Block's map, which he created with Dutch cartographer Cornelis Doedtsz, served as a basis for Willem Blaeu's 1635 map *Nova Belgica et Anglia Nova*.

the sachem, and he realized that the “jewells” — called “zeewan” by the Dutch and “wampum” by the English — were highly prized by Indians throughout the Northeast and could be traded for furs. Elekes was expelled by the Dutch West India Company for his actions, but the revelation he made regarding wampum-for-furs revitalized the North American fur trade.<sup>84</sup>

The Dutch began sending fur-trading expeditions to the region in 1611. However, it was not until 1624, that the Dutch West India Company (first chartered in 1621) authorized the construction of Fort Orange (present-day Albany, NY). With the creation of Fort Orange at the head of the Hudson River, and New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island, the Dutch established their colony of New Netherland, which lasted until 1664 when English forces seized the colony and renamed it New York.<sup>85</sup> Despite high hopes for New Netherland’s fur trade, profits fell short of expectations. The Dutch West India Company initially supplied traders with copper and iron kettles, but soon those items became less-desired by Indian fur suppliers. The Indians’ demand for iron vessels was quickly satiated in the areas closest to the Dutch settlements, and Indians refused to pay a higher premium in furs for the more expensive copper vessels. While metal trade goods were still desired by tribes further inland, they were too heavy and difficult for Dutch

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<sup>84</sup>A.J.F. van Laer, ed. and trans., *Documents Relating to New Netherland, 1624-1626* (San Mateo, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library, 1924), 223-231; Jameson, ed. *Narratives of New Netherland*, 47, 86; Cave, *Pequot War*, 50; Ceci, “Wampum as a Peripheral Resource,” 58, 62, 230-231; Simon Hart, *The Prehistory of the New Netherland Company: Amsterdam Notarial Records of the First Dutch Voyages to the Hudson* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: City of Amsterdam Press, 1959), 37, 54; Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 55. A *fathom* was 6-foot (1.83 m) long, and equal to approximately 330 (5.5 mm) wampum beads.

<sup>85</sup>Laurence M. Hauptman and Ronald G. Knapp, “Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction in New Netherland and Formosa: An Historical Geography of Empire,” in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 121, no. 2 (April 29, 1977), 166-167; Cave, *Pequot War*, 50-51.

traders to transport.<sup>86</sup> When the Dutch discovered the Indians' desire for wampum, they had found an answer to their problems.

In 1626, Secretary Isaak de Rasieres, the Dutch West India Company's commercial agent stationed at New Amsterdam, revitalized the fur trade by offering wampum to Indian fur suppliers. In a letter to the company directors, Rasieres outlined the "trade triangle" that the Dutch created. Rasieres acquired large quantities of wampum from the Indians living around Long Island Sound, and paid them metal goods and "duffles," a cheap textile, in exchange for the beads. The wampum was then sent to the company's upriver trading posts, where fur-trading Indians from the interior came to the Dutch "for no other reason than to get *sewan* [wampum]." The furs were then sent down to New Amsterdam and shipped back to Holland. Rasieres's "trade triangle" worked. The Dutch were soon shipping 10,000 pelts a year to Holland by the end of the 1620s, and by 1635, that number had risen to 16,304 pelts worth 134,925 guilders.<sup>87</sup>

The commodification of wampum profoundly impacted the Pequots and their neighbors. While wampum retained all of its traditional importance for Native people, its new value as a "currency" in the fur trade locked New England Natives into a trans-Atlantic economic system. Metal drills procured from European traders increased the Native production of wampum, which meant that more furs could be purchased with it. The increased availability of wampum meant that Native hunters sought even more furs,

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<sup>86</sup>Cave, *Pequot War*, 50-52.

<sup>87</sup>Isaak de Rasieres to Samuel Blommaert, 1628, in Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland*, 47, 86, 103-113; Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 41-43; Hauptman and Knapp, "Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction," 169; Cave, *Pequot War*, 50-51; Ceci, "Wampum as Peripheral Resource," 58-59



placing Natives and Europeans alike in a commercial cycle.<sup>88</sup> Wampum attained an additional value, at least for a while, among Europeans beyond its importance as a medium of exchange with Indians. The scarcity of hard currency from Europe meant that for several decades, wampum — being “small, durable, and backed by the steady worth of beaver in European markets” — acted as an acceptable form of cash in the New England colonies starting in 1637 at three beads per penny. Between 1634 and 1664, Native peoples paid over twenty-one thousand fathoms (almost seven million beads) of wampum in tribute and fines to English colonists.<sup>89</sup>

In 1627, the Dutch opened the door to other European competitors, when delegations sent by Director General Peter Minuit traveled to the Plymouth colony. English Separatists (otherwise known as the Pilgrims) established Plymouth in 1620, but in order to pay back English creditors and obtain supplies, the Pilgrims sought Indian trading partners to bolster their economy. In 1623, Plymouth governor William Bradford sent envoys to the Narragansetts, but they were turned away because the Pilgrims could offer “only a few beads and knives which were not there much esteemed.”<sup>90</sup> At the time, the Narragansetts were trading partners with the Dutch, and they informed Dutch agents of the Pilgrims’ entreaties. The Dutch, seeking to protect their trade monopoly with the Indians and their access to the wampum that had become the cornerstone of the fur trade, sent their first delegation to Plymouth in early 1627 with the hope of negotiating a trade

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<sup>88</sup>Ceci, “Wampum as a Peripheral Resource,” 58-59; Cave, *Pequot War*, 53.

<sup>89</sup>Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 1: 9, 13; Curtis P. Nettles, *The Money Supply of the American Colonies Before 1720*, University of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History, no. 20 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1934); Ceci, “Wampum as a Peripheral Resource,” 59-62.

<sup>90</sup>Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 139, 379-380; Cave, *Pequot War*, 54.

agreement with Plymouth. Governor Bradford thanked the Dutch for their offer, and he responded that while Plymouth was “fully supplied with all the necessaries,” they might buy Dutch goods the following year “if your rates be reasonable.”<sup>91</sup> Bradford’s letter also contained a warning. He told Dutch authorities in New Netherland that the King of England was the rightful sovereign of North America, and that “his patentees had the right to eject intruders.”<sup>92</sup> However, in remembrance of past kindnesses and as a gesture of goodwill, the Plymouth settlers promised to leave the Dutch settlements in New Netherland alone. In return, Bradford asked that the Dutch cease trading with the Narragansetts and other Native groups who lived “at our [Plymouth’s] doors.” If the Dutch abided by this agreement, Bradford believed that “no other English will go any way to trouble or hinder you.” Unimpressed by Bradford’s warning, Minuit responded with one of his own. “As the English claim authority under the king of England,” Minuit stated that “we derive ours from the states of Holland, and will defend it.”<sup>93</sup>

Still seeking an arrangement with the English, Minuit sent another delegation to Plymouth later in 1627 led by Rasieres. Rasieres feared that the English would tap into the rich wampum trade of Long Island Sound and Narragansett Bay, and push for their own Native alliances. Rasieres warned that if that happened, “it would be a great trouble for us to maintain [trade in Connecticut], for they [the English] already dare to threaten us that if we will not leave off dealing with that people [the Narragansetts and other

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>William Bradford, “Governor Bradford’s Letter Book,” *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 3 (1849): 52-53; Forest Morgan, ed., *Connecticut as a Colony and as a State* (Hartford, 1904), 1: 82; Cave, *Pequot War*, 54-55.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid. The Separatists had spent years living in Holland before coming to America, taking advantage of the Dutch policy of religious tolerance.

Indians], they will be obliged to use other means. If they do that now, while they are yet ignorant of how the case stands [with regards to wampum], what will they do when they get a notion of it?”<sup>94</sup> While attempting to stave off English activities in Long Island Sound and Narragansett Bay, Rasieres made a grave mistake. He sold the Plymouth colonists fifty fathoms of wampum to be used at their northern trading post on the Kennebec River in Maine. That fifty fathoms of wampum changed the economic course of Plymouth Colony, because for the first time they gained a profit from the Indian trade. At first, the northern Indians thought that wampum was only suitable for “the sachems and some special people.” However, within two years those northern Indians “could scarce ever get enough.”<sup>95</sup> Rasieres strategy of keeping English traders in Maine backfired, and soon the English got their wampum directly from the Indians of southwestern New England. Thus after 1627, the cost of both wampum and furs rose due to increased competition.<sup>96</sup>

By the early 1630s, the English set their sights on the Connecticut River Valley, despite Dutch efforts to keep them out. Its rivers and access to furs and wampum made it an attractive trading prospect, and the fertile land offered possibilities of settlement. Early English reports actually spoke well of the Pequots. While they described the Mohawks, the Abenakis, and the Narragansetts as potential threats to the colonies, the English referred to the Pequots as “just and equal in their dealings, not treacherous either

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<sup>94</sup>Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 203-204; Van Laer, *Documents Relating to New Netherland*, 223-224; Jameson, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 100, 109-110; Rink, *Holland on the Hudson*, 86-88; Cave, *Pequot War*, 55.

<sup>95</sup>Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 203-204; Winthrop, *Journal*, I: 129, 131; Cave, *Pequot War*, 79-80; Ceci, “Wampum as a Peripheral Resource,” 59.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

to their countrymen or English.”<sup>97</sup> Such encouraging reports only made the area more attractive to English colonists stationed along the coast at Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay who eagerly sought new areas of expansion for their growing populations, and new trading partners among the River Valley indigenous peoples.<sup>98</sup>

Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth soon battled one another for dominance in the Connecticut region, a precursor of the jurisdictional battles to come. Plymouth struck first, when in 1631 it sent a reconnaissance team to the area led by Edward Winslow.<sup>99</sup> They constructed the first English outpost in the Connecticut River Valley, commanded by Lieutenant William Holmes, on lands purchased from a River Valley Indian named Natawante. Natawante had been persistent in his invitations to the English; he saw a relationship with them as a way to regain authority lost to the Pequots, also a sign of things to come. The deal enabled the Plymouth men to contest Dutch claims to the area. For their part, the Dutch only offered half-hearted resistance, having found the potential military fight too costly.<sup>100</sup>

Plymouth was not the only English colony interested in the Connecticut River Valley. On July 12, 1633, Plymouth and Bay Colony leaders met in Boston for a week-long conference to discuss issues of mutual importance. One of these matters concerned the Connecticut River region, and whether or not to establish a trading post on the river

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<sup>97</sup>Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 80; Cave, *Pequot War*, 39-40.

<sup>98</sup>Thomas, *Maelstrom*, 45-54, 121-202; Cave, *Pequot War*, 46-47. The need for more land was especially true for Massachusetts Bay. Between 1630 and 1633, some three thousand settlers poured into the colony; the English population exceeded eleven thousand by 1638.

<sup>99</sup>For a closer examination of the contest between Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, see Cave, *Pequot War*, 76-96; Jennings, *Invasion*, 197-201.

<sup>100</sup>Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 258-260; Cave, *Pequot War*, 83-84.

“to prevent the Dutch, who were about to build one.” Bay Colony officials rejected the idea, telling the Plymouth delegates that such a task was beyond their means to support. Plymouth officials declared their intentions to move forward with the idea. However, the Bay Colony leaders had misled Plymouth, and launched their own plans to acquire the region for themselves.<sup>101</sup> John Winthrop sent his ship, *The Blessing of the Bay*, on a trading mission to Long Island and Dutch-controlled New Amsterdam. The ship explored the Connecticut coast and Long Island Sound, and confirmed that while the Indians of Long Island appeared to be “a very treacherous people,” they also possessed much high-quality wampum. A subsequent expedition to the region by John Oldham reiterated its substantial trading potential.<sup>102</sup> These voyages only strengthened the Bay Colony’s resolve to expand into Connecticut.

The Connecticut River Valley proved an attractive prospect for permanent English settlement, and residents in Bay Colony towns like Dorchester, Watertown, Newton, and Roxbury soon cast their eyes towards the valley.<sup>103</sup> Newton residents joined *The Blessing of the Bay* on its trip to New Amsterdam and Long Island, and surveyed Connecticut in 1634. The following year, Roger Ludlow led settlers from Dorchester to the Plymouth trading post; soon the settlers dominated the area despite the protests of the Plymouth men. Two years of squabbling followed. Eventually they reached a

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<sup>101</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 103, 109; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 258; Cave, *Pequot War*, 80-81; Jennings, *Invasion*, 188-189.

<sup>102</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 107-111; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 148-157; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 68; Cave, *Pequot War*, 81-83.

<sup>103</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 124; Cave, *Pequot War*, 87. Influential Bay Colony men supported these settlement endeavors. Roger Ludlow, the deputy governor of Massachusetts Bay, was from Dorchester. However, some of the strongest advocates came from the town of Newton, including John Haynes, himself a future governor of Massachusetts Bay, and the ministers Emanuel Stone and Thomas Hooker. Hooker later founded Hartford, CT in 1636, and was later popularly known as the “Father of Connecticut.”

settlement; the Dorchester settlers, organized as the town of Windsor, formally purchased the land they had squatted on. The town occupied nearly ninety-four percent of the land the Plymouth group originally acquired from the River Indians.<sup>104</sup>

As the colonists vied for control over Connecticut, prominent Puritans living in England laid claim to the area under the 1632 Warwick Patent.<sup>105</sup> The actions of Plymouth and Bay Colony settlers, or squatters, troubled these English patrons; they desired an independent colony at the mouth of the Connecticut River. On July 7, 1635, the patentees contracted John Winthrop Jr., the twenty-nine year old son of the Bay Colony's principal leader, to be the "Governour of the river Connecticut in New England and of the Harbors and places adjoining." This appointment was for one year, during which time the younger Winthrop was tasked with the "makinge of fortifications and buildinge of houses." The fort was to contain houses "as may receive men of qualitie" should any of the patentees decide to settle in Connecticut. Winthrop Jr. accepted the appointment the day before he married his second wife, Elizabeth Reade, and the couple sailed for New England a few weeks later.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 124; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 280-282, 290; Charles McLean Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History* New York: 1936), 2: 72-73; Henry R. Stiles, *The History and Genealogies of Ancient Windsor* (Hartford, CT: 1891), 37; Cave, *Pequot War*, 87-89.

<sup>105</sup>Trumbull, *Complete History of Connecticut, Civil and Ecclesiastical* (New London, CT: 1898), 2: 423-424; Albert C. Bates, *The Charter of Connecticut: A Study* (Hartford, CT: 1932), 8-10; Robert C. Black III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (New York: 1966), 85-87; Cave, *Pequot War*, 89. The patent was supposedly issued in 1632 to Robert Rich, second earl of Warwick, and several other prominent Puritan investors.

<sup>106</sup>"Agreement of the Saybrook Company with John Winthrop, Jr., July 1635," *Winthrop Papers*, III: 198-199 (Hereafter *WP*); Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 164; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "The Connecticut River: A Magnet for Settlement," *Connecticut History*, XXXV (1994): 56; Black, *The Younger Winthrop*, 71-81, 85-90; Cave, *Pequot War*, 90; Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 53.

John Winthrop Jr. seemed a capable choice as the new governor. The son of John Winthrop Sr., the younger Winthrop came from a family with deep connections in both Old and New England. He also had successful colonial experience; he first moved to the Bay Colony in 1631, and founded the town of Agawam (later renamed Ipswich) in 1633. He returned to England after the death of his first wife in 1634, but with his new appointment (and new marriage) he was primed to try again. He immediately set about the patentees agenda, and proclaimed Connecticut an independent colony, outside of both Plymouth and Bay Colony jurisdiction. Any English settlers who wished to reside in Connecticut needed to obtain title from him, the duly appointed governor. He then tasked Lieutenant Lion Gardener with building the requested fort at the mouth of the Connecticut River, named "Saybrook" in honor of two patentees, Lord Saye and Sele and Lord Brook.<sup>107</sup>

However, Governor John Winthrop Jr. soon realized that proclaiming authority was much easier than actually wielding authority. The number of towns and settlers upriver continued to grow, and by summer of 1636 included Thomas Hooker's town of Hartford. These settlements antagonized the Dutch, the Plymouth traders, and violated Saybrook's authority. Winthrop Jr. negotiated a settlement whereby the upriver towns recognize him as governor of Connecticut, and he consented to their settlements under the Warwick Patent. However, this fell outside his stated powers, so both Saybrook and the upriver towns turned to Massachusetts Bay to help administer the agreement. On March 3, 1636, the General Court of Massachusetts Bay created an eight member

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<sup>107</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 162, 165-166; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, 2: 77; Black, *The Younger Winthrop*, 96-97, 137; Cave, *Pequot War*, 90-93; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 42-53; Jennings, *Invasion*, 197-201; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Definitions of Liberty on the Eve of the Civil War: Lord Say and Sele, Lord Brook, and the American Puritan Colonies," *Historical Journal* 37 (1989): 17-34.

commission with limited power to govern the Connecticut settlements. This one year commission was “authorized to regulate trade, allocate land, and, if necessary, call a general court and raise a militia for defense of their villages.”<sup>108</sup>

Although an ingenious solution to the problem, Winthrop Jr.’s agreement did not hold. By 1636, Connecticut had become, in the words of Francis Jennings, a “curious spectacle of a substantial colony upriver, pretending to have a governor, and a fortified governor downstream, pretending to have a colony.”<sup>109</sup> The upriver towns continued to grow and drive out all other claimants, while Governor Winthrop Jr. wielded no real power outside the area surrounding Saybrook. If Winthrop Jr. ever hoped to exercise influence as a respected authority in the colony, he needed local allies.

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Situated between coastal wampum and interior furs, the Pequots were in a premier position to control the valuable wampum trade, and play the competing Europeans off of one another. They quickly pressed their advantage. Despite the 1622 Elekes debacle, the Pequots entered into a trading relationship with the Dutch, who were at the time “the best source of European trade goods in southern New England.” A more tactful negotiator and trader named Pieter Barentsen, a man said to be fluent in several regional Native dialects, secured this new Pequot-Dutch arrangement. Shortly after this steady contact with the Dutch began, the Pequots launched a series of expansionist moves that gave them control of the Connecticut River. The Pequots quickly emerged as the dominant

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<sup>108</sup>Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (Boston, 1853), 1: 170; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 180-181; Andrews, *Colonial Period*, 2: 77-78; Cave, *Pequot War*, 96-97.

<sup>109</sup>Jennings, *Invasion*, 198.



Indian regional power.<sup>110</sup> In 1626, Pequot warriors, after “three desperate pitched battles,” defeated the Wangunk sachem Sequin. Sequin led a loose alliance of Connecticut River Indian bands that lived west of the Pequots’ Thames River territory. After their defeat, those River Indians became tributaries of the Pequots, paying an annual tribute to the Pequot grand sachem in exchange for Pequot protection. This expansion continued into the early 1630s, as the Pequots placed several eastern Long Island tribes under tributary status by 1632. With their victories in Connecticut and eastern Long Island, the Pequots dominated key aspects of Rasieres’s “triangle trade”: wampum production on the New England seacoast and furs coming down the Connecticut River. Their control over the area allowed the Pequots to grow “rich and powerful and also proud”, and it filled them with “pieces, powder, and shot.” By 1634, the Pequots reputation as “a stately warlike people” had been solidified.<sup>111</sup>

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Pequot dominance however would be short-lived, as English settlers out of Massachusetts set their sights on the Connecticut River Valley, and other Native groups fought to establish themselves as regional powers. The English sought to oust the Dutch as the dominant European presence in the region. English colonial officials also presented the chief rivals of the Pequots, the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, with the opportunity to remove a major obstacle to their own political designs of expansion. In

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<sup>110</sup>Cave, *Pequot War*, 50; Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*, 97; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 55.

<sup>111</sup>O’Callaghan, *History of New Netherland*, 1: 149-150; Daniel Gookin, “Historical Collections of the Indians in New England,” in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 1<sup>st</sup> ser. 1 (1792): 147; Wood, *New England’s Prospect*, 61; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 203-204; Cave, *Pequot War*, 50; Oberg, *Uncas*, 37; Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*, 97; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York, 1982), 147-152.

the ensuing chaos the Pequots were brought to the brink of destruction. Cassacinamon and his fellow Pequots had to rely on centuries of tradition and social networks to help them rebuild their communities and adapt to this “new world.”

## Chapter 2: “Your feet shall be set on their proud necks” – The Pequot War of 1637

The Pequots’ monopoly over the Connecticut River Valley trade made them “the stoutest, proudest, and most successful in their wars of all the Indians” by the early 1630s.<sup>112</sup> Yet, this regional dominance was short-lived; tensions over issues of land, trade, and political prominence erupted into violence with the Pequot War of 1637. The Pequot War was a milestone; “the first large-scale violent encounter between the English colonists of New England and an indigenous people,” giving it “a special [albeit dubious] place in the overall encounter of European and American civilizations.”<sup>113</sup> The Pequot War foreshadowed future battles along the westward-moving Anglo-Indian frontier. Yet the war was not simply an Anglo-Indian conflict. Before 1637, the Pequots possessed no allies among the New England colonies; a failure that spelled of leadership that proved disastrous. Other major Algonquian confederations — namely the Mohegans and the Narragansetts — counted English allies as friends and advocates.<sup>114</sup> The Mohegans and

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<sup>112</sup>As the premier Algonquian power in Connecticut, Pequot hegemony extended “over divers petty sagamores; as over part of Long Island, over the Mohegans, and over the sagamores of Quinnapeake, yea over all the people that dealt upon Connecticut River, and some of the most southerly inhabitants of the Nipmuck Country, about Quinebaug.” Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians of New England* (1674; reprint, New York, 1970), 7; Shepard’s “Memoir” in *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, From 1623-1636*, ed. Alexander Young (Boston, 1846), 548-549; Lynn Ceci, *The Effect of European Contact and Trade on the Settlement Patterns of Indians in Coastal New York, 1524-1665* (New York, 1990), 209; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York, 1982), 147; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003), 39.

<sup>113</sup>Michael Freeman, “Puritans and Pequots: The Question of Genocide,” in *New England Quarterly*, June 1995, 278; For an in-depth analysis of the political situation in the Connecticut River Valley leading up to the Pequot War, as well as the seventeenth-century Puritan mindset that justified the actions taken during the war, see Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 186-227.

the Narragansetts promoted their own self-interests; with the Pequots removed as a regional power, ambitious leaders like the Mohegan sachem Uncas and the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi advanced their own agendas. This made the Pequot War a contest between rival Native powers as much as an Anglo-Indian war. The English victory lay not in their “superiority,” but in these Anglo-Algonquian alliances and the brutality of English tactics.

For the Pequots, the war nearly spelled their destruction, with hundreds of their people killed or enslaved, their territory seized and the survivors scattered amongst their enemies. Robin Cassacinamon’s actions during the conflict are unknown, although he was likely in his teens at the time.<sup>115</sup> Several key political figures, English and Algonquian, rose to prominence during and after the war; individuals with whom Cassacinamon struggled, negotiated, and manipulated throughout the seventeenth-century. Cassacinamon assumed leadership after the war, faced with the monumental task of working with the Pequots to rebuild their communities. The war brutally demonstrated several critical facts. First, Cassacinamon needed a strong English ally to champion his people among the colonial power brokers. Second, the Pequots had to control the lines of communication and information that pertained to them, so as to

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<sup>114</sup>Eric Spencer Johnson, “‘Some by Flatteries, Others by Threatenings’: Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England,” PhD dissertation (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1993), 109.

<sup>115</sup>Again, Cassacinamon’s exact date of birth is unknown. He first appears in colonial records in 1638, following the Treaty of Hartford, and is recognized as carrying out a diplomatic mission for the Mohegan sachem Uncas. This suggests that he would have been at least in his mid-to-late teens, as it is doubtful that Uncas would have made a child part of a diplomatic envoy to the English. However, the fact that Cassacinamon was not executed or identified as a sachem during or after the end of the war suggests that he had not yet attained the position. Kevin A. McBride, interview by author, tape recording, Mashantucket, CT, July 2008.

prevent others from manipulating it against them. And third, while Pequot communities favored Pequot leaders, those leaders must be capable individuals who mastered the first two issues. Sassacus, sachem during the war, failed at these tasks. Denied these crucial elements, the Pequots lost the war; their communities could not be rebuilt until they addressed those conditions. Although the Mohegans, Narragansetts, Connecticut, and Massachusetts Bay united to eliminate the Pequots, personal conflicts and jurisdictional battles plagued the endeavor. These conflicting agendas provided Cassacinamon another factor to exploit in the post-war period. The Pequot War stands as a definitive milestone in Cassacinamon's story, the history of the Pequots, and all of southern New England.

## I

The Pequots' hegemony in the region in part depended on the limited number of traders who provided European goods. As long as the Dutch remained the sole Europeans trading in the Connecticut River Valley, the Pequots retained their advantage and power. However, when English colonists cast their eyes toward the Connecticut River Valley, some Natives saw an opportunity to rid themselves of the Pequots' authority. Wahginnacut, a sachem of the River Indians that lived in the Connecticut River Valley, contacted both John Winthrop and William Bradford in April of 1631. The sachem asked the governors of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth, respectively, if they would "have some Englishmen to come plant in his country," and enter into an alliance with him. If the English immigrants came to settle in his "very fruitful" country, Wahginnacut offered to provide them with corn and eighty beaver skins a year. However, both Bradford and Winthrop realized that Wahginnacut possessed other motives. Massachusetts Bay rejected Wahginnacut's invitation, while Plymouth sent

only a token force led by Edward Winslow that spent more time harassing Dutch traders than aiding the River Indians. As a result, the Pequots defeated Wahginnacut and further extended their control over the River Valley.<sup>116</sup>

Uncas, grand sachem of the Mohegans, nursed an even greater grudge against the Pequots. In 1626, Uncas's father, the Mohegan sachem Owaneco, orchestrated an alliance with the Pequot grand sachem Tatobem. The sachems arranged for Tatobem's daughter to marry Uncas's brother, but the brother died, so they arranged for "Uncas, the next brother to the deceased, should proceed in the said match."<sup>117</sup> Uncas married the woman, and Owaneco died shortly after the marriage. With his father's death, Uncas became the Mohegan's new sachem. However, the Pequot alliance placed the Mohegans (and Uncas) under Tatobem's authority. Uncas could not resist the situation; disease had weakened the Mohegans, and the Pequots controlled access to European traders. Only by accepting subordination to Tatobem could Uncas "have liberty to live in his own Countrey" near the Thames River.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Bradford described Wahginnacut as the leader of "a company of Banishte Indeans...that were drivene" out of the Connecticut River Valley "by the potencie of the Pequents." Winthrop was even more blunt, describing Wahginnacut as "a very treacherous man, and at war with the Pekoath (a far greater sagamore)." William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. William T. Davis (New York: 1920), 300; John Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: 1908), April 4, 1631, 1: 61; Benjamin Trumbull, *A Complete History of Connecticut (1797)*, 2 vols. (New London, CT: 1898), 1: 12; Peter A. Thomas, "Squakeag Ethnohistory: A Preliminary Study of Culture Conflict on the Seventeenth Century Frontier," *Man in the Northeast* 5 (1973): 28; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 97.

<sup>117</sup> While the connections between southern New England Algonquians ran deep, the Pequots and the Mohegans retained the closest links in terms of language, culture, and kin relationships. "Pedigree of Uncas," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register (NEHGR)* 10 (1856): 228; *Connecticut Archives Town and Lands, Town and Lands*, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 1: 67; Oberg, *Uncas*, 38-39; Lorraine Elise Williams, "Ft. Shantok and Ft. Corchaug: A Comparative Study of Seventeenth Century Culture Contact in the Long Island Sound Area" (diss., New York University, 1972), 20, 49, 96, 133, 179-180; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 223; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: 1986), 150.

Tatobem proved an effective grand sachem. Capable of negotiating several agreements with a variety of Native and European leaders, he oversaw much of the Pequots' rise to power. However, his authority was not absolute. In response to English interest in the area, the Dutch increased their presence in the region. In 1632, Hans Ercluyts of the Dutch West Indian Company purchased land near the mouth of the Connecticut River that the Dutch named Kievet's Hook. The following year, in June 1633, Jacob Van Curler purchased twenty acres of land near present-day Hartford from a Pequot sachem named Nepuquash. The Dutch built a new trading post on the site that they called the House of Good Hope.<sup>119</sup>

The Dutch build-up in the river valley did not deter English expansion. Shortly after the Dutch completed the House of Good Hope, William Holmes of Plymouth led an expedition up the Connecticut River. Despite threats by the Dutch, Holmes and his crew sailed to a site north of the Dutch trading post and erected their own fort. The Plymouth men were accompanied by a River Indian sachem named Natawante who, like Wahginnacut, appealed to the English for help against the Pequots. Unlike Wahginnacut, Natawante successfully gained English attention, and by 1633, English colonists believed Connecticut an ideal place for settlement.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 55; John W. DeForest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut-From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, Connecticut: WM. Jas. Hamersley, 1851; reprint, Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1964), 71; Trumbull, *Connecticut*, 1: 17; Oberg, *Uncas*, 41.

<sup>120</sup>When the Plymouth crew reached a spot near the present-day city of Windsor, "they clapped up their house quickly and landed their provisions and left the company appointed, and sent the bark home, and after palisadoed their house and fortified themselves better." Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 259; Oberg, *Uncas*, 41-42.

The Pequots perceived this increased European presence as a threat, and “were much offended” that the English “brought home and restored” Natawante. William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth Colony, wrote that the English fortified their post because “they were to encounter with a double danger in this attempt, both the Dutch and the Indians.”<sup>121</sup> More European traders in the region weakened the Pequots’ control over both the trade and their Native tributaries. The Pequots targeted any Natives who attempted to trade with the Europeans without their permission. In the fall of 1633, Pequot warriors killed several Narragansetts (or Narragansett tributaries) that traveled to the House of Good Hope. This proved a grave miscalculation. The Dutch believed that their agreement with Nepuquash gave all Natives the right to come to the trading post; the Dutch interpreted the Pequots’ attack as a breach of that agreement. They kidnapped Tatobem, and the Pequots paid a huge ransom in wampum and furs to secure his safe release. The Dutch took the ransom and returned Tatobem’s corpse.<sup>122</sup>

Though long interested in the Connecticut River Valley, it was a case of mistaken identity that drew the English into this political quagmire: the murder of Captain John Stone in 1634. Stone was not a respectable citizen by any Puritan standard; Massachusetts Bay banished him for disorderly behavior, attempted piracy, and drunken debauchery. As they traveled to Virginia, Stone and his men stopped at the Connecticut River, and roughed up some Natives. Stone’s crew then drank themselves into a stupor and neglected to stand guard. Pequot warriors, thinking Stone was Dutch and thus

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid.; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 99.

<sup>122</sup>Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 55-56; Oberg, *Uncas*, 42; Jennings, *Invasion*, 189.



responsible for the death of Tatobem, snuck into his camp and murdered him. This proved to be another grave mistake.<sup>123</sup>

In the chaos that followed Tatobem's murder, the Pequots chose a successor, which exacerbated the rift between the Pequots and the Mohegans.<sup>124</sup> The name of the first successor was lost; however, it is known that he orchestrated the murder of John Stone, and was himself killed during an attack on a Dutch outpost. The Pequots faced yet another major decision, and the Mohegan Uncas pressed his advantage. Uncas acquiesced to the Pequot grand sachem while Tatobem lived, but now that he was gone and the Pequots faced a new challenge from the Dutch, Uncas seized the opportunity to press his advantage. Uncas claimed the Pequot sachemship through his wife, Tatobem's daughter. However, the Pequots chose Sassacus, Tatobem's brother, as sachem instead. When Uncas rebelled against the decision, the majority of the Pequots remained loyal to Sassacus, because Sassacus was a Pequot and Uncas was not.<sup>125</sup>

Although he was a Pequot, Sassacus was not an effective leader, and Uncas challenged Sassacus on at least five separate occasions. Uncas and other Mohegan leaders began an expansionist drive westward from their principal village of Shantok and the Thames River, with their efforts backed by the Narragansetts. They attempted to seize Pequot territory and hunting grounds "almost to the Connecticut River," but were

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<sup>123</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 108, 118; Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 269-270; Oberg, *Uncas*, 42-43; Jennings, *Invasion*, 189.

<sup>124</sup>Kevin McBride, "The Legacy of Robin Cassasinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period," *Northeast Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, ed. Robert Steven Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 76.

<sup>125</sup>De Forest, *Indians*, 84.

repelled each time by Pequot counterattacks.<sup>126</sup> The Pequots drove Uncas and his followers into temporary exile among the Narragansetts. However, after each attempt, Uncas ritually supplicated himself before Sassacus, who permitted the Mohegan sachem to return to his homelands. Scholars have posited that Sassacus “could not generate the support necessary to execute his Mohegan rival, no matter how treacherous his behavior.” Uncas, despite his defiance, was deeply connected to Sassacus and other high-status Pequots through marriage, and these kin relationships protected Uncas from permanent reprisal. If Sassacus accepted Uncas’s submission, he avoided retaliatory strikes by Uncas’s kin, and perhaps staved off further threats to his position.<sup>127</sup> These kin relationships did produce political gains, but those gains did not benefit Sassacus.

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In November 1634, Sassacus sent envoys to Massachusetts Bay to negotiate a reasonable settlement with English authorities. He hoped to avoid a war with the English, secure a trade agreement with them after losing the Dutch, and enlist the Bay Colony’s aid in negotiating with the Narragansetts. Governor John Winthrop Sr. met with the envoy, and demanded that the Pequots hand over the men responsible for Stone’s death. However, according to the Pequot envoy, the guilty parties had themselves been killed in skirmishes and by smallpox. Instead, the Pequots offered the English compensation for Stone’s death in wampum, furs, and other trade goods. The Pequots considered this to be a fair deal; the English received compensation for the dead

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid.; Oberg, *Uncas*, 48; Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native Peoples of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman, OK, 1996) 151; *CR*, 3: 479-480; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 205-206.

<sup>127</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 48; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 54-55; Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 215.

man, and they would have the opportunity to reestablish friendly relations with the English. The Pequots then requested English help in brokering peace with the Narragansetts. The English refused to believe that Stone's killers were dead; they demanded the Pequots turn over the perpetrators, and allow English settlers into their territory. In return, they agreed to a trade deal with the Pequots and promised to help negotiate with the Narragansetts. The final agreement gave the English the right to establish more settlements in Connecticut (after proper payment for the land was made) and established renewed trade relations between the two parties. The agreement also reaffirmed the English claims for Stone's killers as well as granting the English restitution in wampum and furs.<sup>128</sup>

For two years, the agreement between the Pequots and the English held, although it was "imperfectly observed on both sides." The Pequots and English established a trade relationship, and more settlers moved into the Connecticut River Valley. However, problems soon emerged. The Bay Colony arbitrarily increased the demanded payments, which affronted the Pequots. The increased amounts shifted the payments from compensation to tribute, and within Algonquian political relationships, "tribute implied subordination." Sassacus and the Pequots refused to make the payments, and did not turn over Stone's killers (assuming they still lived). And ultimately, the only provisions the colonists fulfilled with any true commitment involved sending settlers into Connecticut.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>De Forest, *Indians of Connecticut*, 80-81; John Winthrop, *The Winthrop Papers, 1498-1654*, ed. Allyn B. Forbes et al., 6 volumes (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), Vol. 1: 147-149 (Hereafter *WP*); Jennings, *Invasion*, 190-192.

<sup>129</sup>De Forest, *Indians*, 86; Jennings, *Invasion*, 191-194.

Tension between the Puritans and the Pequots escalated with the death of John Oldham in 1636. Oldham was murdered by Indians from Block Island, who were, in fact, Narragansett tributaries. However, by 1636 English authorities could not miss an opportunity to demonstrate their strength to the Pequots, and by extension, to other Native communities in the region.<sup>130</sup> The murder of John Oldham, coupled with the Pequots' refusal to comply with the terms of the 1634 treaty, led Massachusetts Bay officials to assume that the Pequots plotted against them. After they consulted with their ministers "about doing justice upon the Indians for the death of Mr. Oldham," the Bay leaders organized a punitive expedition in August 1636, comprised of ninety volunteers and led by John Endicott.<sup>131</sup> Officials ordered Endicott to seize control of Block Island and kill all the adult men and enslave the women and children as punishment for Oldham's death. Endicott was to then sail to the Pequot village at the mouth of the Pequot River (later renamed the Thames River) and demand that the Pequots hand over

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<sup>130</sup>Ronald Dale Karr, "Why Should You Be So Furious?": The Violence of the Pequot War," in *The Journal of American History*, December 1998, 898; Cave, *Pequot War*, 10-11; Lynn Ceci, "Native Wampum as a Peripheral Resource in the Seventeenth-Century World-System," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 59; Jennings, *Invasion*, 206. The Puritans had a variety of economic, political, and philosophical reasons for escalating the conflict with the Pequots. In the seventeenth century, most Puritans viewed Native peoples as "savages" who constantly tested them and threatened their survival as the elected saints of the Christian God. The controversy over Oldham's death, as well as the unresolved issue of Stone's, also gave the English the chance to obtain more land in Connecticut, and break the Pequots' control over the wampum trade; since the colonies were so far removed from minted forms of currency, they had begun to rely on wampum as a medium of exchange with the Natives.

<sup>131</sup>Philip Vincent, "A True Relation of the Late Battel Fought in New England, between the English and the Pequot Savages," in Charles Orr, *History of The Pequot War: The Contemporary Accounts of Mason, Underhill, Vincent, and Gardener*, reprinted from the *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Cleveland: The Helman-Taylor Company, 1897), 109-110; Winthrop, *Papers*, 3:25-26; Shurtleff, *Records*, 1:86; Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 255; Cave, *Pequot War*, 109-110. The forty-eight year old Endicott had been in New England since 1628, and he had a reputation for being impatient, uncompromising, and zealous. He was also a "highly esteemed" colonial official; at the time of the expedition, Endicott was an assistant to the governor, and in the years that followed he served as both Massachusetts Bay's deputy governor and governor.

“the murderers of Capt. Stone and other English.” The Pequots were to pay one thousand fathoms of wampum to the Bay Colony in damages and turn over a few children as hostages to ensure their compliance. If they refused, Endicott was to take the children “by force.”<sup>132</sup>

With the Endicott expedition, the English began a concerted effort to extend their authority over the Connecticut region. The expedition reached Block Island shortly before dusk on August 22, 1636, and spent the next two days trying to carry out their objectives, but they failed. The Indian inhabitants of Block Island successfully avoided capture, but Endicott’s tactics made an impression. After the raid, the Block Islanders sent an annual wampum tribute to Boston to secure English protection.<sup>133</sup>

Endicott’s expedition next arrived at Fort Saybrook to launch the second phase of the Bay Colony’s plan. He failed to endear himself to Lieutenant Lyon Gardener, the English commander at Saybrook. “You come hither to raise these wasps around my ears,” Gardener exclaimed, “and then you will take wing and flee away.”<sup>134</sup> The expedition made the quick journey from the fort to the Thames River, where they encountered an envoy of Pequots and Western Niantics, one of the Pequots’ tributary allies. Underhill claimed that “the Indians spying us came running in multitudes along the water side crying, ‘What cheer, Englishmen, what cheer, what do you come for?’”

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<sup>132</sup>Philip Vincent, “A True Relation of the Late Battel Fought in New England, between the English and the Pequot Savages,” in Orr, *History of The Pequot War*, 109-110; John Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:186; Cave, *Pequot War*, 109; Jennings, *The Invasion of America*, 209-210.

<sup>133</sup>For a complete description and analysis of Endecott’s Block Island raid, see Cave, *Pequot War*, 11-13; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:187-88; Captain John Underhill, “Newes from America,” in Orr, *History of The Pequot War*, 51-55; Shurtleff, *Records*, 1:181; Jennings, *Invasion*, 209-210.

<sup>134</sup>Unable to dissuade Endicott from attacking the Pequots, Gardener provided some grain and men, only after he convinced the Bay Colony men to confiscate some of the Pequots’ harvest so as to replenish Saybrook’s supplies. Lion Gardener, “Relation of the Pequot War,” in Orr, *History of The Pequot War*, 126-127; Cave, *Pequot War*, 113-114.

Underhill noted that the Indians' mood quickly changed when the English refused to answer their calls. The Indians, growing suspicious of the Englishmen's silence, called out "are you angry, will you kill us, and do you come to fight?"<sup>135</sup> The Natives watched the ships throughout the night. In the morning, Underhill reported that a Pequot elder, "a grave senior, man of good understanding," came aboard to parlay with the English. The expedition's leaders told the elder in no uncertain terms that the English would not "suffer murderers to live," and that "the governors of the Bay sent us to demand the heads of those persons that had slain Captain Norton and Captain Stone and the rest of their company."<sup>136</sup>

After a series of humiliating exchanges, Endicott decided to attack the Pequots first.<sup>137</sup> As the commanders readied their men for battle, another Pequot envoy came

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<sup>135</sup>Underhill, "Newes from America," 55-56; Cave, *Pequot War*, 114; Jennings, *Invasion*, 210-211.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Underhill, "Newes from America," 57-60; Cave, *Pequot War*, 114-117. Endicott's struggle with the Pequot envoy unraveled in the following manner. The "witty and ingenious" Pequot elder confessed that the Pequots had indeed killed Stone and his men. The envoy then described how the Pequots' grand sachem Sassacus snuck aboard Stone's ship and found him drunk in his cabin. Sassacus seized his chance, and "having a little hatchet under his garment, therewith knocked him in the head," in an act that the Pequots believed was "an honorable but misguided act of lawful retribution." According to the elder, Sassacus killed Stone to avenge the death of Tatobem, whom the Dutch had murdered even after they received the ransom they demanded for his safe release. The elder then asked if the Englishmen "could blame us for avenging so cruel a murder?" Endicott's men protested, and reminded the man that Stone was English and not Dutch. However, the elder explained that the Pequots could not have known the difference, "for we distinguish not between the Dutch and the English, but took them to be one nation, and therefore we do not conceive that we wronged you, for they slew our king: and thinking these captains to be of the same nation and people of those that slew him, made us set upon this course of revenge."

The envoy again offered the English compensation for Stone's death, but Endicott and the English commanders believed the envoy was lying to them. Endicott refused to believe that the Pequots could not tell the difference between the English and the Dutch, after the Pequots "had sufficient experience of both nations." The Englishman grew angry, and yelled that "you [Pequots] have slain the King of England's subjects." To avenge this, the English stated again that they "have come to demand an account of their blood." However, the envoy still insisted that "we know no difference between the Dutch and the English, they are both strangers to us, we took them all to be one; therefore, we crave pardon, we have not willfully wronged the English." The expedition's leaders refused to accept that answer, and asserted they would attack the Pequots if "the heads of those persons that have slain ours" were not immediately handed over to them. The Pequot elder then declared that "Understanding the ground of your coming, I will entreat you to give me liberty to go ashore, and I shall inform the body of the people what your intent and resolution is,

forward; he promised that if the English put down their weapons and marched thirty paces closer to the Pequots, a sachem would meet with Endicott and his commanders. According to Captain Underhill, Endicott “rather chose to beat up the drum and bid them to battle.” As the Bay Colony troops marched forward and “displayed our colors,” they soon found that “none would come near us, but standing remotely off did laugh at us for our patience.”<sup>138</sup> Furious at yet another humiliation, the English “gave fire to as many as we could come near,” and forced the Pequots to flee. Endicott and his men “spent the day burning and spoiling the country,” the Pequots’ wigwams and corn were put to the torch, and any buried supplies they could find were also destroyed.<sup>139</sup> Unable to kill any Natives, the English forces contented themselves with “having burnt and spoiled what we could light on.” Endicott’s men then returned to Fort Saybrook for a brief stay before departing for Boston.<sup>140</sup>

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and if you will stay on board, I will bring you a sudden answer.” The Pequot ambassador then disembarked the ship, but Endicott refused to wait for the Pequots’ response and sent his troops ashore clad in their armor and ready for battle. Although the envoy tried to get the English to hold their position, Endicott marched his troops up to a small hill to prevent the Pequots from seizing the high ground “to our [English] prejudice.” The Pequot envoy then informed Endicott that the high-ranking sachems had gone to Long Island, so there were no Pequot leaders with sufficient status to respond to their demands.

The English again called the envoy a liar, and threatened to “beat up the drum, and march through the country, and spoil your corn,” if Sassacus did not present himself immediately. The envoy once again promised he would try to find Sassacus, and left the English forces on the hill. After several hours of waiting, during which time Underhill claimed he and his men “used as much patience as ever men might, considering the gross abuse they offered us,” the Pequot only sent the occasional envoy to ask the English to keep waiting while they tried to find Stone’s killers. The English troops then realized that the Pequots were only stalling for time; there were no women or children in the Pequot camp, and some of the Pequot men were seen burying supplies.

<sup>138</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 60.

<sup>139</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 60; Cave, *Pequot War*, 117.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*

Underhill reported only one English casualty during the raid, while John Winthrop later heard through the Narragansetts that thirteen Pequots had been killed.<sup>141</sup> However, English pride in their “victory” was short-lived, as everything Lt. Gardener feared came to pass.<sup>142</sup> Despite complaints from both Gardener and Governor Bradford of Plymouth Colony, who told Winthrop “that we had occasioned a war, etc., by provoking the Pequots,” Massachusetts Bay considered the raid a success. Winthrop felt justified, saying that “we went to not make war upon them, but to do justice.”<sup>143</sup> Winthrop hoped that Endicott’s raid convinced the Pequots that “they could not save themselves nor their corn and houses from so few of ours,” and secured the Pequots’ good behavior. However, the people of Saybrook and the Connecticut River Valley settlers lacked Governor Winthrop’s optimism. In April 1636, Connecticut settlers sent a letter to the Bay Colony, and complained that Endicott’s raid placed all of their lives in danger.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>According to Underhill, one Englishman was wounded in the leg. Underhill, “Newes from America,” 60; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:189-190; Cave, *Pequot War*, 117.

<sup>142</sup>Gardener’s dislike of Endicott proved justified. Endicott abandoned the Saybrook men who had accompanied him on the raid. Endicott promised that the Saybrook group, who traveled in their own boats rather than in the Bay Colony ships, would be the first ones evacuated after the raid. However, Gardener reported that Endicott’s forces simply boarded their three Bay Colony ships and left the Saybrook men behind, who “ought to have marched aboard first.” The Saybrook party tried to leave in their boats, but a shift in the wind made that impossible. Stuck until the weather changed, the men decided to try and gather as much Indian corn as they could. The Pequots, who had been watching from the surrounding woods, then “came forth, about ten at a time” and shot arrows at the Englishmen. The Saybrook party fell into a defensive position and fired back into the woods. After several hours of this standoff, the Pequots left. The Saybrook group reached their ships and returned to the fort, where Gardener noted that “two of them came home wounded.” Gardener, “Relation,” 127; Cave, *Pequot War*, 118.

<sup>143</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:194; Cave, *Pequot Cave*, 118-119.

<sup>144</sup>Endicott killed thirteen Pequots and burned a total of sixty wigwams; Bay Colony leaders felt this to be justifiable retribution for the Pequots’ killing of “four or five” Englishmen. Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:194, 212; Cave, *Pequot Cave*, 119.



## II

The concerns of the Connecticut settlers proved well-founded. Roger Williams, the banished minister and Indian trader living among the Narragansetts, heard through his Native contacts that Endicott's raid galvanized Pequot resistance. In a letter to John Winthrop, Williams noted that "the Pequots heare of your preparations, etc., and Comfort themselves in this that a witch amongst them will sinck the pinnaces, by diving under water and making holes, etc." Once they had defeated the English with the power of their shamans, the Pequots expected to "enrich themselves with a store of guns." While the Pequots failed to obtain these weapons, they were psychologically prepared to confront the English. Several weeks after the raid, Williams heard from his informants once again. Williams told Bay Colony leaders that the Pequots and Western Niantics were determined to "live and die together, and not yeald one up." Williams then notified Winthrop of a more dangerous development: the Pequots attempted to convince the Narragansetts "that the English were minded to destroy all Indians," and proposed a Pequot-Narragansett alliance to confront this mutual threat.<sup>145</sup> If this alliance took place, Puritan leaders foresaw disaster for all of the New England colonies.

Bay Colony authorities implored Williams to convince the Narragansetts to side with the English. Williams, in very dramatic prose, later recounted this mission. Once he reached the Narragansett village that hosted the Pequot delegates, Williams recalled the many "dayes and night my Busines forced me to lodge and mix with th bloudie Pequot Embassadors, whos Hands and Arms, (me thogt,) reaked with the bloud of my

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<sup>145</sup>Roger Williams to Deputy Governor John Winthrop [c. August 1636], in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 54-55; Williams to Winthrop [October 24, 1636?], in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1:69; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1:190; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 294-295; Cave, *Pequot War*, 123.

counrimen, murther'd and massacred by them on Connecticut River, and from whome I could not but nightly looke for their bloody Knives at my owne throat allso.” Since these Pequot ambassadors were guests of the Narragansetts, Williams had little to fear in the way of violence. However, the minister successfully used his connections among the Narragansetts “to breake to pieces the Pequt’s negociation and Designe,” and he secured the Narragansetts’ neutrality for the time being.<sup>146</sup>

Bay Colony authorities still desired a formal alliance with the powerful Narragansetts, and influential voices among the Narragansetts made the case for the English. The Narragansetts sheltered several of the Pequots’ enemies and disgruntled tributaries, who openly favored an English alliance. Cutshamekin was one such instigator; the Massachusetts sachem had traveled with Endicott as an interpreter and sent a Pequot scalp to the Narragansett sachem Canonicus after the raid. Wequash and Wuttlackquiakommin, two Pequot rivals of Sassacus, saw this as a chance to remove their communities from his authority also supported an Anglo-Narragansett alliance.<sup>147</sup> Despite those entreaties, an Anglo-Narragansett military alliance remained a difficult prospect. Some of the Narragansetts resented the English for an earlier alliance between Plymouth Colony and the Wampanoags, while Canonicus distrusted all Europeans.

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<sup>146</sup>Williams to Major John Mason and Governor Thomas Prencce, June 23, 1670, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 2: 611-612; Cave, *Pequot War*, 124.

<sup>147</sup>Williams to Winthrop, May 1, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 72-73; Salisbury, *Manitour and Providence*, 214-215; Cave, *Pequot War*, 125-126; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 84, 87, 99, 103-105. Wequash was a Pequot-Niantic leader. He and his son, Wequashcook, led the eastern Pawcatuck Pequot group after the war. If Wequash was Pequot-Niantic, why would he side against Sassacus and the Pequots? According to Johnson, Native communities in a confederation possessed a “fluidity of affiliation,” and if it suited their purposes, break away from a confederation that no longer met their needs. This kind of fissioning was a political strategy employed by communities if a principal sachem did not meet his obligations, or if the members of the community possessed stronger kin relationships with another group. Europeans became a tool used in this process.

However, Williams enjoyed “far better dealings” with Miantonomi, Canonicus’s nephew and heir-apparent as Narragansett grand sachem. Miantonomi was interested in an alliance with the English, who he believed would be useful partners in trade and war. He cultivated ties with Williams, and “kept his barbarous court” at Williams’ trading post.<sup>148</sup>

Bay Colony leaders, resumed their negotiations with the Narragansetts in the fall of 1636, and Miantonomi traveled to the Bay Colony in October 1636, accompanied by “two of Canonicus’s sons, and another sachems, and twenty sanaps.” Miantonomi assured Bay Colony authorities that the Narragansetts “had always loved the English and desired firm peace,” and he promised that “they would continue in war with the Pequods and their confederates until they were subdued, and desired that we should do so: They would deliver our enemies to us, or kill them.” Miantonomi tempered his offer with a condition; “if any of theirs [Narragansetts] should kill our [English] cattle, we would not kill them,” but accept payment for damages rendered. If the English agreed, Miantonomi declared that “they would now make a firm peace, and two months hence they would send us a present.”<sup>149</sup>

The next day, Governor Vale and the Bay Colony officials presented the Narragansetts with a treaty that allowed for “free trade” between the Narragansetts and the English, but stipulated that the Narragansetts should not “come near our plantations during the wars with the Pequods, without some Englishmen or known Indians.” The Narragansetts were not to harbor any Pequots that sought refuge with them, they had to execute any Natives that killed any Englishmen or turn them over to colonial officials,

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<sup>148</sup>Williams to Winthrop, May 1, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 72-73; Cave, *Pequot War*, 125; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 149-151.

<sup>149</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 191-193; Cave, *Pequot War*, 128.

and they had to send back to the colonies any servants that ran away from their English masters. In return, the English promised “to give them notice when we go against the Pequods,” whereupon the Narragansetts would provide the English forces with guides. Finally, both sides promised that neither one would “make peace with the Pequods without the others consent.” The Narragansett delegates put their personal marks on the treaty, but when they complained they did not understand some of the terms, the Bay Colony officials “agreed to send a copy to Mr. Williams, who could best interpret it for them.” Williams’s receipt of the treaty reassured the Narragansetts and after lengthy negotiations, the Anglo-Narragansett alliance was formalized late in the fall of 1636.<sup>150</sup>

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As political negotiations took place in Boston, the men at Saybrook were left to deal with the immediate danger of a protracted struggle with the Pequots.<sup>151</sup> Victory

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 149-151; Jennings, *Invasion*, 213-214.

<sup>151</sup> The first matter of business was securing their food supply, so Gardener and a group of men journeyed to the English cornfields that lay two miles from the fort. After harvesting the corn, Gardener stored it “in the strong-house,” which he “had built for the defence of the corn.” At the end of the day, Gardener “left five lusty men in the strong-house, with long guns” behind to guard the harvest, and promised that he would send a shallop to pick them up the next day. Three of the men “not regarding the charge I [Gardener] had given them,” left the strong house to go duck hunting. As the men returned to the strong house, Pequot warriors, who had been hiding in the vegetation watching them the entire time, “arose out of their ambush, and shot them all three.” One of the men “escaped through the corn, shot through the leg,” and reached the safety of the strong house. His two compatriots were not as fortunate; captured by the Pequots, the two men were tortured throughout the night until they died. The next morning, the shallop from Fort Saybrook found only three survivors. Gardener later noted in his record that as the shallop moved away from the shore, the Englishmen “saw the house on fire.” After the Pequot warriors burned the strong house, they followed the shallop back to the fort, and burned the hay stacks and outbuildings “within a bow shot of the fort itself. They slaughtered a cow outside the palisade, and for some days thereafter other cattle wandered back to the fort with arrows stuck in their hides.”

At the same time the cornfield guards faced down the Pequot ambush, the Saybrook men faced a similar situation. Matthew Mitchell, a trader from the upriver town of Wethersfield, journeyed to Saybrook and asked Gardener to lend him a shallop so that he could “fetch hay home from the Six-Mile Island.” Gardener was initially reluctant to help Mitchell, since he felt that Mitchell had “too few men, for his four men could but carry the hay aboard, and one must stand in the boat to defend them, and thy must have two more at the foot of the Rock, with their guns, to keep the Indians from running down upon them.” However, Mitchell persisted and Gardener gave in, but only after he warned Mitchell that he should “scour the meadow with their three dogs” first so as to make sure there were no Pequots present. Mitchell, like Endicott and the strong house guards, did not listen to Gardener’s warning, and he paid the price. When

seemed remote to the men of Saybrook, who despite promises of aid had essentially been abandoned by the Connecticut River towns, Massachusetts Bay, and the Warwick Patentees and their agent, John Winthrop Jr. In the fall of 1636, a close associate of the Winthrop family named Edward Gibbon visited the fort. Gibbon found Gardener to be a capable leader who kept his troops well-prepared, but the structure itself proved to be inadequate, certainly not the well-kept settlement the Warwick Patent holders wished it to be. Gibbons advised John Winthrop Jr., ostensibly the governor of the river towns of Connecticut, to stay away, and Winthrop Jr. followed his advice.<sup>152</sup>

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Mitchell's men arrived at Six Mile Island, they immediately started loading the hay without checking the meadow first. Pequot warriors "rose out of the long grass, and killed three" of Mitchell's men. The Pequots captured a fourth man, who Gardener recorded was "the brother of Mr. Mitchell," and then "roasted him alive." Gardener, "Relation," 128-129; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 192; Cave, *Pequot War*, 128-129, 214-215.

Jill Lepore examines a similar phenomenon in her work on King Philip's War. According to Lepore, the destruction of colonial property was an Algonquian attack on English notions of bounded systems and private property. See Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 74. The torture of prisoners struck the English as evidence of Native barbarism, but to the Pequots and other indigenous peoples of the Northeast, the ritual torture of enemies was a contest of power. The torturers attempted to take their enemy's power, while the victim proved his by withstanding the torture. For a greater examination of this phenomenon, see Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 13-16.

<sup>152</sup>“Edward Gibbon to John Winthrop, Jr., September 29, 1636,” *WP*, 3:323; “Lion Gardener to John Winthrop, Jr., November 7, 1636,” *WP*, 3:319-321; Underhill, “Newes from America, 66-67; Gardener, “Relation,” 134-135; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 194; Cave, *Pequot War*, 129-131. For an examination of the complicated political situation in Connecticut, and Winthrop's relationship to Saybrook, see Jennings, *Invasion*, 196-201, 204, 217.

In November 1636, Lt. Gardener wrote to Winthrop to protest his decision, and decry the fact that the fort had not received any of the supplies they had been promised. Gardener's suffering was made more pronounced by the fact that ships journeyed up the Connecticut River every week to supply the colonists living at Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield. Gardener reminded Winthrop Jr. that he had done all he could to keep the garrison at Saybrook in “a warlike condition” so “there shall be noe cause to complayne of our Fidelitie.” However, he warned that “if I see that there be not such care for us that our lives may be preserved, then I must be forced to shift as the lord shall direct.”

As Gardener composed his letter, a supply ship arrived at Saybrook “in dark night beyond expectation.” Gardener however, did not destroy the letter or remove his complaints; instead, he added a postscript to it. In that addition, Gardener apologized for his edginess, but he stressed to Winthrop the danger that everyone in the Connecticut River Valley faced. The river was surrounded by hundreds of

Edward Gibbons may have found the Ft. Saybrook complex wanting, but it did possess several cannons mounted in its walls which discouraged a direct assault on the fort.<sup>153</sup> However, on February 22, 1637, Gardener led a party of ten men and three dogs half a mile upstream from the fort to a narrow strip of land that jutted into the river, to retrieve twenty “timber-trees” that they cut the previous summer and float them down to Saybrook. As a precaution Gardener ordered his men “to burn the weeds, leaves and reeds, upon the neck of land,” and as the fire spread, “there starts up four Indians out of the fiery reeds.” The Indians burst out of the reeds and drove the Englishmen back to the fort. Gardener and another man were wounded but recovered from their injuries, while three Englishmen died. In the chaos of the battle, the Pequots captured another man from Gardener’s group. They cut off his hands and his nose, and tortured him until he died.<sup>154</sup> Gardener took eight men and “found the guns that were thrown away, and the body of one man shot through, the arrow going in the right side, the head sticking fast, half through a rib on the left side, which I took out and cleansed it.” They took the arrowhead

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hostile Natives intent on war with the English, so Gardener advised that all English vessels traveling the river be armed for their own safety and that their crews only disembark at the English towns.

The fate of Joseph Tilly, a trader from Massachusetts Bay who frequently traveled up the river from his small depot at Saybrook to Windsor, stood as a testament to Gardener’s warning. In April 1637, Tilly returned to Saybrook following a Pequot raid. Tilly and Gardener got into an argument, and Tilly soon left to go to Windsor. The trader sailed three miles upriver and left his vessel to hunt with a shipmate, at a place that was nowhere near the English settlements and that Gardener later named “Tilly’s Folly.” The Pequots captured the two men; the second man was killed immediately but Tilly was not. The Pequots took Tilly downriver to a location visible from Ft. Saybrook. As the men at Saybrook watched, the Pequots “tied him to a stake, flayed his skin off, put hot embers between the flesh and the skin, cut off his fingers and toes, and made hatbands of them.” The Pequots, like other Native peoples in the region, believed that the way a warrior endured ritualized torture was a testament to their personal power and inner strength. John Winthrop later recorded that Tilly won the respect of his captors “because he cried not in his torture.”

<sup>153</sup>Cave, *Pequot War*, 131.

<sup>154</sup>Gardener, “Relation,” 129-130; Lion Gardener to John Winthrop, Jr., March 23, 1637, *WP*, 3:381-382; Cave, *Pequot War*, 132.

from the body and sent it to the authorities in Massachusetts Bay, “because they had said that the arrows of the Indians were of no force.”<sup>155</sup>

Several days later, the Indian trader Thomas Stanton stopped at Saybrook on his way to Boston. A large group of Pequots surrounded the fort, but instead of attacking, three men came to negotiate. Gardener took Stanton, one of the few Englishman who was fluent in regional Algonquian dialects, with him to meet the Pequots. Interpreters like Stanton performed a vital function and could influence the outcome of such delicate negotiations. At this time however, the Pequots lacked an interpreter of skill and intelligence to promote their own agenda.<sup>156</sup> The Pequots asked if the English were at war with the Western Niantics across the river, “for they were our friends and came to trade with us.”<sup>157</sup> Gardener, suspecting this to be a trap, replied through Stanton that “we knew not the Indians from one another, and therefore would trade with none.” The tense discussion continued, and as Gardener related the story years later, “they [the Pequots] said, Have you fought enough? We said we knew not yet.” The Pequots continued with

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<sup>155</sup> Once the party was safe behind Saybrook’s defenses, Gardener confronted “the cowards that left us,” Thomas Rumble and Arthur Branch, and “resolved to let them draw lots which of them should be hanged” for their desertion. According to Gardener, Rumble and Branch had violated the Articles of War, which “did hang up in the hall for them to read, and they knew they had been published long before.” It was only through “the intercession of old Mr. Michell, Mr. Higgison [Higginson], and Mr. Pell” that Gardener spared their lives. Gardener, “Relation,” 130; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 108; Cave, *Pequot War*, 132.

<sup>156</sup>Gardener, “Relation,” 131; Cave, *Pequot War*, 133; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 108. According to Johnson, most translators were Native Americans which proved to be a source of frustration and suspicion among English colonials. English colonials needed Native interpreters in order to conduct business with Native Americans, but feared and/or distrusted them.

<sup>157</sup>Not trusting the Pequots, Gardener ordered six men ahead to make sure the Pequots did not cut Gardener and Stanton off from the fort when they went out to negotiate. The English troops “found a great number of Indians creeping behind the fort, or betwixt us and home,” but when the Pequots saw the troops “they ran away.” The Pequots refused to believe Gardener was who he claimed to be, because he had been “shot with many arrows” during their previous confrontation. Gardener confirmed that he had been hit by their arrows, but that his “buff coat preserved me, only one [arrow] hurt me.” The Pequots were convinced that Gardener was the fort’s commander because when he spoke to them, “they knew my voice, for one of them had dwelt three months with us, but ran away when the Bay-men came first.” Gardener, “Relation,” 131-132; Cave, *Pequot War*, 133-134; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 108

their questions and, invoking Endecott's raid, "they asked if we did use to kill women and children?" Gardener replied that "they should see that hereafter." The Pequots "were silent a small space," and then defiantly said, "We are Pequits, and have killed Englishmen, and can kill them as mosquitoes, and we will go to Conectecott and kill men, women, and children, and we will take away the horses, cow, and hogs."<sup>158</sup>

After he translated this statement, Stanton grew enraged and told Gardener "to shoot that rogue, for, said he, he hath an Englishman's coat on, and saith that he hath killed three, and these other four have their cloathes on their backs." Gardener calmed Stanton down, and challenged the Pequots to fight the men of Fort Saybrook and ignore the other Connecticut River towns. In an attempt to protect the settlements, Gardener engaged in a bit of reverse psychology. He warned the Pequots that if they attacked the towns they would be sorry because, "English women are lazy, and can't do their work; horses and cows will spoil your corn-fields, and the hogs their clam-banks, and so undo them." If the Pequots desired useful English supplies, they would find hatchets, hoes, cloth, "and all manner of trade" within Fort Saybrook; all they had to do was take it. Gardener recorded that after hearing this speech, the Pequot delegation "were mad as dogs, and ran away." Gardener waved his hat above his head "and the two great guns went off, so that there was a great hubbub amongst them."<sup>159</sup>

Fort Saybrook received English reinforcements from the river towns and Massachusetts Bay two days after this meeting with the Pequots. The reinforcements found the Saybrook defenders to be physically and mentally exhausted. Captain John

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Gardener, "Relation," 132-133; Cave, *Pequot War*, 134.



Underhill, a veteran of the Endicott raid, arrived “with twenty lusty men, well armed,” to “supply the necessity of those distressed persons, and to take the government of that place for the space of three months.” Underhill recalled the distressed state of the Saybrook garrison. The Pequots had taunted the Englishmen throughout the siege. According to Underhill,

Some of their [the Pequots] arms they got from them [the English], others put on the English clothes, and came to the fort jeering of them, and calling, Come and fetch your Englishmen’s clothes again; come out and fight, if you dare; you dare not fight; you are all one like women. We have amongst us that if he could kill but one of you more, he would be equal with God, and as the Englishman’s God is, so would he be.<sup>160</sup>

However, despite the siege and constant psychological warfare, the Pequots could not breach the Saybrook palisades. When the various English reinforcements arrived in the spring of 1637, the Pequots gave up and left.

### III

On April 23, 1637, Pequot warriors “fell upon Watertowne, now called Wethersfield, with two hundred Indians.” The Pequot warriors “slew nine” Wethersfield residents and “took two young maids prisoners, killing some of their cattle, and driving some away.”<sup>161</sup> Taking their two prisoners with them, about one hundred Pequots again journeyed to Fort Saybrook to taunt the English garrison. The Pequots “put poles in their canoes, as we put masts on our boats, and upon them hung our English men’s and women’s shirts and smocks, instead of sails, and in way of bravado came along in sight

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<sup>160</sup>Gardener, “Relation,” 133; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 61-62.

<sup>161</sup>Vincent, “True Relation,” 100; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 62; John Mason, “A Brief History of the Pequot War: Especially of the Memorable Taking of their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637-Written by Major John Mason, a principal Actor therein, as then chief Captain and Commander of Connecticut Forces” (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1736), in Orr, *History of the Pequot War*, 18; Cave, *Pequot War*, 135; Jennings, *Invasion*, 217.

of us.” As the Pequot flotilla drew closer to the fort, the Saybrook defenders “made a Shot at them with a Piece of Ordnance, which beat off the Beak Head of one of their Canoes.” The Pequots fled.<sup>162</sup>

The two English girls were eventually retrieved from the Pequots via the intervention of Dutch traders. The Dutch, after making an agreement with the English at Saybrook, had seized hold of seven Pequots who had come to trade with them. The Pequots returned the girls to secure the release of their own people. When the girls returned to Fort Saybrook, English authorities questioned them about their experiences. They reported that the “Indians carried them from place to place, and showed them their forts and curious wigwams and houses, and encouraged them to be merry,” and that they were not abused in any way. However, they also said that the Pequots had fifteen guns, and the powder and shot needed to inflict substantial damage on English troops.<sup>163</sup>

After the Pequots “triumphed and succeeded” in Wethersfield, they experienced a renewed sense of purpose. Wethersfield was a prime example of Algonquian warfare: minimal casualties, the taking of captives and loot, and taunting the foe with the proof of their superior prowess. The Pequots’ treatment of their captives was also typical; captives were taken for adoption and ransom, so they were not mistreated. Although they faced an uncertain foe in the English, the Pequots dealt with them in a strictly Algonquian framework, unaware that the English did not share the same kind of restraint. The Wethersfield victory reaffirmed Pequot power to both their tributaries and their enemies.

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<sup>162</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 18-19; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 63; Vincent, “True Relation,” 101.

<sup>163</sup> Underhill, “Newes from America,” 69-72; Vincent, “True Relation,” 100-101; Cave, *Pequot War*, 143; Oberg, *Uncas*, 57, 63.

This enhanced prestige also had political repercussions, as some of the Pequots' former tributaries reaffirmed their loyalty to the Pequots.<sup>164</sup>

Wethersfield forced colonial officials to adopt stronger tactics. If they did not act “to take the pride and take down the insolencie of these now-insulting Pequots,” John Higginson of Massachusetts Bay wrote that “we are like to have all the Indians in the cuntry about our ears.” Nothing the English attempted had thus far worked, and Native leaders like Uncas and Miantonomi saw it as an opportunity to overrun the Pequots. The sachems goaded their English contacts, hoping to provoke colonial authorities into a bold course of action. They too encouraged the English to operate within an Algonquian concept of war; a big victory stood to enhance English prestige just as Wethersfield had done for the Pequots. The Narragansetts “sent word to the English, that the Pequets had solicited them to join their forces with them,” and Miantonomi told Roger Williams that “the Nanhigonsicks are at present doubtfull of Realitie in all our [English] promises.”<sup>165</sup>

In this time of escalating English fears, Uncas pressed his advantage. Unlike the lengthy negotiations that secured the Narragansett's aid, the Mohegans proved eager to confront Sassacus and the Pequots. According to Eric Spencer Johnson, sachems like Uncas viewed such Anglo-Algonquian alliances as a strategic weapon in their own internal Algonquian struggles.<sup>166</sup> A Mohegan-English alliance strengthened Uncas in his campaign against the Pequot confederation, and he encouraged bold action from the

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Roger Williams to Henry Vane and John Winthrop, May 13, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 78; Thomas Hooker to John Winthrop, May 1637, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 407; Vincent, “True Relation,” 101; Oberg, *Uncas*, 57-58.

<sup>166</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 99-105, 123, 151.

English in Connecticut. In his talks with Thomas Hooker and other Connecticut authorities, Uncas argued that the English could not abide such an affront to their honor. Hooker wrote that “The Indians here our friends were so importunate with us to make war presently,” they threatened “that unlesse we had attempted some thing we had delivered our persons unto contempt of base feare and cowardice, and caused them to turn enemyes agaynst us.” If the English did not join Uncas in his struggle against Sassacus, then the English would face “a larger and more dangerous Indian opponent that did not fear the Puritans.”<sup>167</sup>

Uncas arrived in Hartford with seventy Native warriors as the River Towns debated over what action to take against the Pequots. In his assessment of their motives, John Underhill wrote that “these Indians were earnest to join with the English, or at least to be under conduct, that they might revenge themselves of those bloody enemies of theirs.” On May 1, 1637, the Connecticut General Court issued their resolution. The General Court resolved “that there shalbe an offensive war agt the Pequoitt.”<sup>168</sup>

Captain John Mason conscripted ninety men from the river towns into his force.<sup>169</sup> Besides fighting men, each town provided other needed supplies and provisions for this military operation. Uncas and his warriors received “liberty to follow the company, but not to join in confederation with them; the Indians promising to be faithful, and to do

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<sup>167</sup>Roger Williams to Henry Vane and John Winthrop, May 13, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 78; Thomas Hooker to John Winthrop, May 1637, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 407; Vincent, “True Relation,” 101; Oberg, *Uncas*, 57-58.

<sup>168</sup>The Connecticut General Court was comprised of three commissioners and two magistrates from each of the river towns of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield. J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), 1:9-10 (Hereafter *CR*); John Higginson to John Winthrop, May 1637, *WP*, 3:405-406; John Mason, “Brief History,” 19; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 67; Oberg, *Uncas*, 58.

<sup>169</sup>John Mason participated in the 1620s English campaigns against the Netherlands.

them what service lay in their power.” Before heading downriver to Fort Saybrook, Mason and his troops attended a church service in Hartford. Just as the Pequots had done, the English sought the protection of their spiritual benefactors. The minister instructed the men to “execute vengeance upon the heathen...binde their Kings in chaines, and Nobles in fetters of Iron...make their multitudes fall under your warlike weapons...your feet shall be set on their proud necks.” In early May of 1637, Mason set out for Fort Saybrook with ninety English troops and seventy Mohegan warriors.<sup>170</sup>

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The voyage to Saybrook took several days, as the three English vessels frequently ran aground. Uncas grew “Impatient of Delays,” and asked that the Mohegans “be set on shoar, promising that they would meet us at Saybrook.” Mason agreed, and Uncas led his men overland to Saybrook while the English forces continued down the Connecticut River. When the Mohegans reached Saybrook, they came upon a party of thirty to forty Pequots camped near the fort in order to gather information on English activities. Uncas and his warriors “fell upon...the Enemy near Saybrook Fort, and killed seven of them outright; having only one of their’s wounded.” When Uncas presented Mason with seven Pequot heads, Mason interpreted the attack as an act of “special Providence; for before we were somewhat doubtful of his [Uncas’s] Fidelity.”<sup>171</sup>

Once Mason’s forces reached Saybrook, he discussed strategy with Underhill and Gardener. The Pequots expected an attack from Pequot Harbor, and “kept a continual Guard upon the [Pequot] River Night and Day.” The English risked a confrontation with

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<sup>170</sup>CR, 1:9-10; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 67; Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence*, 105-106; Jennings, *Invasion*, 217; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 109; Cave, *Pequot War*, 137.

<sup>171</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 20; Oberg, *Uncas*, 59.

an enemy whose “Numbers far exceeded” theirs; any battles at the harbor could “possibly dishearten” the Saybrook forces and make the trek to Sassacus’s village impossible.

Instead, Mason proposed that the English forces sail farther east to Narragansett Bay and then march overland. Mason reasoned that “we should come upon [the Pequots’] Backs, and possibly might surprise them unawares, at worst we should be on firm land as well as they.” The new plan also offered the possibility that the Narragansetts might join them, which served as a tremendous boon for their alliance.<sup>172</sup>

The Saybrook commanders questioned whether the new plan would work, while Mason himself expressed reluctance to go against their established orders. And questions still lingered as to the loyalty of the Mohegans. After months of battling the Pequots, many of the Saybrook men feared that their supposed allies “might revolt, and turn their backs against those they professed to be their friends, and join with the Pequeats.” Gardener displayed an understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of Native relationships when he asked Mason and Underhill “how they durst trust the Mohegin [Mohegan] Indians, who had but that year come from the Pequits.” Mason assured Gardener that they could trust the Mohegans due to their previous actions, and because “they could not well go without them for want of guides.” Gardener remained unconvinced, and spoke directly to Uncas through the interpreter Thomas Stanton. Gardener demanded that Uncas prove his loyalty to the English by sending twenty men “to the Bass river, for there went yesternight six Indians in a canoe thither; fetch them now dead or alive, and then you shall go with Maj. Mason, else not.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 20-21; Cave, *Pequot War*, 144.

The Mohegans returned with “five Pequeats’ heads, one prisoner, and mortally wounded” a seventh Pequot warrior.<sup>174</sup> Gardener recognized the prisoner as a Pequot named Kiswas, who spoke English and had spent a great deal of time around Saybrook. He also killed Englishmen. Gardener acquiesced to Uncas’s demand that they let the Mohegans deal with Kiswas. The Mohegans started a large fire, and tied Kiswas’s leg to a post. According to Peter Vincent, Kiswas “braved the English,” and taunted the Mohegans “as though they durst not kill a Pequet.” After they burned Kiswas, they cut off pieces of his flesh; finally, they tied a rope around his free leg, and “pulled him in pieces.” The Mohegans then started to sing and dance “round the fire in their violent and tumultuous manner,” when Underhill, unable to witness the ritual torture any longer, shot Kiswas in the head to end his life.<sup>175</sup>

Later writers embellished the gory details of Kiswas’s death to satiate audience demands for “bloodthirsty Indians,” and often added that Uncas and the Mohegans relished eating Kiswas’s flesh raw. Historian Michael Oberg doubts the cannibalistic elements because they are not substantiated by the evidence, but he argues that much of the original story may be true. Northeastern Natives ritually tortured captured enemies to prove that their power was greater than their foe’s. The condemned warrior endured the torture as a testament of his own strength, and the power of his kin, who would avenge

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<sup>173</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 67-68; Gardener, “Relation,” 136; Oberg, *Uncas*, 60.

<sup>174</sup> Mason turned to the chaplain for advice, and asked him to “commend our Condition to the Lord, that Night, to direct how and in what manner we should demean ourselves.” The chaplain, a Mr. Stone, contemplated the new strategy throughout the night, and prayed for a sign “that may confirm to us of the fidelity of these Indians [Mohegans]...that now pretend friendship and service to us.” The sign came in the form of Pequot heads. Mason, “Brief History,” 21-23; Gardener, “Relation,” 136; Vincent, “True Relation,” 101; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 68-69; Trumbull, *CR*, 1: 56-57; Oberg, *Uncas*, 61-63; Winthrop, *Journal*, 218; Cave, *Pequot War*, 144-145; Jennings, *Invasion*, 218.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*

his death. Previous incidents where the Pequots tortured captured Saybrook defenders can be understood in this manner. By ritually torturing Kiswas, Uncas proved that he “was not a Pequot traitor or an English pawn. Uncas was a Mohegan.”<sup>176</sup>

Convinced of the Mohegans’ commitment to the English, Mason, Underhill, and Gardener agreed to the new plan.<sup>177</sup> On Friday May 19, ninety Englishmen and seventy Mohegans left Fort Saybrook, and arrived in Narragansett Bay on Saturday evening, May 20, 1637. The English spent the Sabbath aboard their ships, but then foul weather kept them from going ashore for a couple of days. On the evening of May 23, the expeditionary force reached the village of the Narragansett sachem Miantonomi.<sup>178</sup>

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Mason met with Miantonomi and informed him of the colonists’ plans. Miantonomi granted the Anglo-Mohegan forces permission to travel through his territory, but warned that Mason’s forces “were too weak to deal with the Enemy, who were (as he said) very great Captains and Men skilful in War.” The Narragansett’s “somewhat slighting” comment reaffirmed for Mason his fear that the battle-tested Pequot warriors “far exceeded” the English in number and skill. The Anglo-Mohegan company resolved to carry out its mission. Marching twenty miles westward from Miantonomi’s village, the joint force reached an Eastern Niantic village led by the sachem Ninigret, where they camped for the night. Mason wrote that the Niantics “carried very proudly” towards the Englishmen, “not permitting any of us to come into their fort.” The Eastern Niantics, like

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 13-16.

<sup>177</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 21-23; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 68-69; Oberg, *Uncas*, 62-63; Cave, *Pequot War*, 144-145; Jennings, *Invasion*, 218.

<sup>178</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 23-24; Oberg, *Uncas*, 64; Jennings, *Invasion*, 218. Mason sent twenty of the Connecticut troops back to defend the river towns, while Underhill ordered nineteen of his men to join the Pequot expedition.



the Western group, had once been tributaries of the Pequots, and many of them had ties to the Pequots through marriage and kin. Ninigret had ties to both the Pequots and the Narragansetts, and was related to the Narragansett sachem Canonicus through marriage. To prevent any Niantics from alerting their Pequot kin, Uncas surrounded the village so that no Niantic “should be suffered to pass in or out...upon peril of their lives.” The next morning, Narragansett warriors joined the expedition, and “encouraged divers Indians of that Place to Engage also.” The expedition grew to several hundred members.<sup>179</sup>

The joint English-Algonquian force left the Niantic village at around eight in the morning on May 25. The march was long, the English were low on rations, and the heat was oppressive; several men passed out along the way. After about twelve miles, the expedition reached the Pawcatuck River and stopped “at a Ford where our Indians told us the Pequots did usually fish.” Mason later claimed that the Narragansetts manifested “great Fear” and deserted in large numbers. Mason then asked the Mohegan sachem Uncas, whose seventy warriors had stayed with the English, “what he thought the Indians would do?” Uncas, seeking to enhance his own alliance with the English, replied that the Narragansetts would all leave them, but that he and the Mohegans “would never leave us.”<sup>180</sup> Mason later formed an alliance with the Mohegans, so his singling out of the Narragansetts as fearful bolstered later Mohegan claims.

Three miles west of the Pawcatuck River, the Anglo-Algonquian force reached the Pequot territory. The Pequots “had two Forts almost impregnable,” one at

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<sup>179</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 24-25; Vincent, “True Relation,” 102; Oberg, *Uncas*, 64.

<sup>180</sup>Mason later found these Narragansett fears ironic, considering that those same Natives “had frequently despised us, saying, That we durst not look upon a Pequot, but themselves would perform great Things.” Again, given Mason’s alliance with Uncas, it is doubtful that only the Narragansetts expressed fears concerning the Pequots. Mason, “Brief History,” 25; Cave, *Pequot War*, 146-147.

Weinshaucks and one at Mystic. At first, the English considered assaulting both forts, but they realized that Weinshaucks “was so remote that we could not come up with it before Midnight, though we Marched hard.” The fact that Sassacus and the majority of the Pequot warriors remained stationed at Weinshaucks also influenced their decision. Exhausted from the march, and eager to avoid stronger enemy warriors, the Anglo-Algonquian force decided to attack Fort Mystic.<sup>181</sup> Though well-fortified, Mystic was closer and contained far fewer warriors within its palisades. About an hour after nightfall, the men came “to a little Swamp between two Hills,” and camped for the night. The guards heard singing coming from Fort Mystic; the Pequots celebrated, “with great Insulting and Rejoycing,” the fact that they had seen the English “sail by them some Days before.” The Pequots took this as a sign that “we [the English] were afraid of them and durst not come near them.”<sup>182</sup>

Fort Mystic was built on “a piece of ground, dry and of best advantage.” It covered “at least two acres of ground,” and was surrounded by palisades “ten or twelve feet high” made of “young trees and half trees, as thick as a man’s thigh or the calf of his leg.” The Pequots latched them “as close together as they can” in a circular pattern. Between the palisades were “divers loopholes” that permitted defenders to fire arrows — or “winged messengers” in the words of Reverend Philip Vincent — at any attackers. The fort possessed two entrances that were “entered sideways” and located where the defensive walls overlapped, and then stopped “with boughs or bushes, as need requireth.” Located behind the walls were hundreds of Pequots, most of them elderly men, women,

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<sup>181</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 25-26; Cave, *Pequot War*, 147; Jennings, *Invasion*, 221-222.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*

and children. This massive structure proved a departure from standard Pequot habitations. The fort “was so crowded with these numerous dwellings, that the English wanted foot-room to grapple with their adversaries.”<sup>183</sup>

Gardener’s earlier threat that the Pequots “would see that hereafter” came true on May 26, 1637. In the early morning hours, Mason, Underhill, Uncas and their men quietly approached the fort. The expedition soon reached the Pequots’ cornfield at “the foot of a Great Hill.” Mason spoke with Uncas and Wequash — the renegade Pequot who, like Uncas, had joined the alliance as a way to break away from Sassacus — and gave the Mohegans yellow bands “for their heads” so the English forces could identify their allies, but he did not have enough for the Narragansetts. A few Narragansetts were hit during the fight as a result of this. After a prayer, Mason and Underhill divided their forces into two groups that would attack each entrance simultaneously.<sup>184</sup>

Mason intended “to destroy them [the Pequots] by the Sword and save the Plunder.” The three hundred or so Native allies surrounded the fort “in a ring battalia, giving a volley of shot upon the fort,” while the English entered through the fort’s two gates. As the English forces made their way to the northeast gate, Mason recalled that he “heard a Dog bark, and an Indian crying Owanux! Owanux! Which is Englishmen! Englishmen!” The English then “called up our Forces with all expedition” and “gave fire upon them through the Pallizado,” as they worked their way through the main entrance clearing whatever tree branches and bushes blocked their way. While Mason’s force

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<sup>183</sup>Vincent, “True Relation,” 105-106; Oberg, *Uncas*, 66; Cave, *Pequot War*, 147-148.

<sup>184</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 27; Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 83-84; Oberg, *Uncas*, 66: Reportedly, Mason “demanded of them, Where was the Fort?” The sachems “answered On the Top of that Hill. Then we demanded, Where were the Rest of the Indians? They answered, Behind, exceedingly afraid.”

attacked one gate, Underhill led the charge through the second. After clearing the entrance, the Englishmen entered the village with “our swords in our right hand, our carbines and muskets in our left hand.”<sup>185</sup>

As the English burst through the gates, the Pequots inside mounted a strong resistance. The Pequots launched a barrage of arrows that struck several of Underhill’s men “through the shoulder, some in the face, some in the legs.” Underhill and Mason were themselves nearly wounded or killed during the course of the battle. Underhill “received a shot in the left hip,” but was unharmed due to his thick buff coat, while Mason’s life was only spared because his helmet deflected several arrow strikes. In his retelling of the events at Mystic, Underhill praised the Pequots for their courage, and felt that many had “perished valiantly” defending their homes. “Mercy did they deserve for their valor,” he wrote, “could we have had the opportunity to have bestowed it.”<sup>186</sup>

Mason was not as charitable toward the Pequots, and later blamed them for what the English did next. As the English stormed into the village, some of the Pequots ran, while others “crept under their Beds” looking for shelter. Mason, “seeing no Indians, entered a Wigwam.” When he did, “he was beset with many Indians, waiting all

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<sup>185</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 26-27; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 78-80. Alfred Cave addresses a controversy with regard to Captain Underhill’s entrance into Mystic Fort in his analysis of the Pequot War. According to Underhill’s narrative, Underhill found the tree branches and brush blocking the entrance to be “too heavy for me,” so he fell back and made his men “pull out those breaks.” After the war, the Reverend Philip Vincent accused Underhill of cowardice, a charge that Underhill denied. Reverend Vincent was not present at Mystic, and his charge against Underhill may have been motivated by a religious dispute. According to Cave, Underhill held antinomian views which Vincent would have considered heretical. However, John Mason offers support to Vincent’s interpretation in his own account of the attack, which was published after Vincent’s and Underhill’s. Mason believed the charges of Underhill’s cowardice, and attributed the story to some of Underhill’s own men. See Vincent, “True Relation,” 103; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 80; Mason, “Brief History,” 29-30; Cave, *Pequot War*, 149, 211.

<sup>186</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 79-80; Cave, *Pequot War*, 149.

opportunities to lay Hands on him, but could not avail.” Mason beat them off and stumbled back out into the crowded alleyways between the dwellings, where he “saw many Indians in the Lane or Street; he making towards them, they fled.” Mason pursued them “to the End of the Lane, where they were met by Edward Pattison, Thomas Barber, with some others.” At the end of the lane, the English slew seven of those Pequots, while the rest escaped. Frustrated by the battle, and angry that the Pequots were not fighting in an “acceptable” way, Mason “Marched at a slow Pace up the Lane he came down.” As he neared the northeast gate, he “saw two Soldiers standing close to the Pallizado with their Swords pointed to the Ground.” Seeing their swords, Mason told the soldiers that “We should never kill them after that manner... We must burn them.” Mason then stepped into the wigwam he had been in earlier and “brought out a Firebrand, and putting it into the Matts with which they were covered, set the Wigwams on fire.” Two of Mason’s men, Lt. Thomas Bull and Nicholas Olmstead, saw what Mason had done and picked up torches of their own. Captain Underhill then “set fire on the south end with a train of powder.” Soon, fires were spreading throughout the village, as “the Indians ran as Men most dreadfully Amazed.” The fires “blazed most terribly, and burnt all in the space of half an hour.”<sup>187</sup>

As the Pequot wigwams burned, the English watched as “such a dreadful Terror did the Almighty let fall upon their [the Pequots] Spirits, that they would fly from us and run into the very Flames, where many of them perished.” Mason and Underhill then ordered their men to “fall off and surround the Fort.” Trapped inside the fort, the Pequots panicked; some climbed “to the Top of the Pallizado; others of them running into the

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<sup>187</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 28-29; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 79-80; Cave, *Pequot War*, 150; Jennings, *Invasion*, 223-225.

very Flames.” A group of Pequots managed to overcome their panic, and regrouped “windward” of the flames to start “pelting at us [the English] with their Arrows.” However, Mason and his men “repayed them with our small Shot,” and they fell.

Forty other Pequots, whom Mason identified as “the Stoutest,” made a bold charge out of fort and “perished by the Sword.” English troops gunned down or “entertained with the point of the sword” anyone that tried to escape, be they men, women, or children. Pequots that somehow avoided the flames and the swords of the English “fell into the hands of the Indians that were in the rear of us.” Underhill recounted that many more “were burnt in the fort, both men, women, and children.” “There were only seven taken captive,” Mason recalled, “and about seven escaped.” The carnage continued, and “in little more than one Hour’s space was their impregnable Fort with themselves utterly Destroyed, to the Number of six to seven Hundred.”<sup>188</sup>

The English reveled in their victory. Mason justified the incineration of the Pequots as divine retribution leveled against the heathens

who not many Hours before exalted themselves in their great Pride, threatening and resolving the utter Ruin and Destruction of all the English, Exulting and Rejoycing with Songs and Dances: But God was above them, who laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to scorn making them as a fiery Oven: Thus were the Stout Hearted spoiled, having slept their last Sleep, and none of their Men could find their Hands: Thus did the Lord judge among the Heathen, filling the Place with dead Bodies!<sup>189</sup>

Underhill struggled more with the morality of what the English had done. In his account of Mystic, Underhill recalled that “young soldiers that never had been in war” were troubled “to see so many souls lie gasping on the ground.” He even recognized that some

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<sup>188</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 28-31; Underhill, “Newes from America,” 80-81.

<sup>189</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 30.

readers of his account might question “Why should you be so furious?...Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion?” Yet, despite his acknowledgement of the brutality at Mystic, Underhill felt that English actions were justified. “When a people is grown to such a height of blood, and sin against God and man, and all confederates in the action,” Underhill wrote, “there he hath no respect to person, but harrows them, and saws them, and puts them to the sword.” In cases like the Pequot War, “the most terriblest death that may be” was allowed against one’s enemies.

The Mohegans and Narragansetts who accompanied the English in this expedition did not share Mason’s or Underhill’s views. Although they wanted to defeat the Pequots, Algonquian custom allowed for the adoption of captives and survivors. For Native peoples, warfare was a test of prowess, skill, and cunning, and captives could be adopted as members of the village and tribe. As the Natives watched the slaughter of their rivals, they were horrified at the brutality they witnessed. Underhill noted that “our Indians came to us,” and “cried Mach it, mach it; that is It is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slays too many men.”<sup>190</sup>

While one hundred and fifty of the six to seven hundred Pequots killed at Mystic were warriors, most of the Pequots killed were women, children, and elderly tribal members. In contrast, the English only lost two men during the battle, with twenty others wounded. The indiscriminate slaughter of women and children alongside warriors “suggests that the burning of Fort Mystic cannot be dismissed or excused...as a military necessity.” The Mystic massacre “was an act of terrorism intended to break Pequot

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<sup>190</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 81, 84; Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 29; Cave, *Pequot War*, 151-152.

morale”; at worst, it was a deliberate attempt at genocide.<sup>191</sup> However, the English would never have had the chance to unleash such brutality had they not received Algonquian aid. With this one swift, brutal act, the English and their Native allies dealt a mortal blow to the Pequots’ resistance.

#### IV

The Pequots’ crushing defeat at Fort Mystic did not translate into an immediate cessation of hostilities. While hundreds of Pequots had been killed, hundreds more remained with Sassacus at Weinshauks. The tribe reeled from the brutal loss of so many of their kin, and Sassacus, overwhelmed by the circumstances, failed to hold the Pequot confederation together. The Pequots’ authority over their remaining tributaries collapsed. Three days after Mystic, Waiandance, a Montauk leader and the “next brother to the old Sachem of Long Island,” journeyed to Saybrook to parley with the English. The Montauks, being former Pequot tributaries, and Waiandance wanted “to know if we were angry with all Indians.” Gardener told him, “No, but only with such as had killed Englishmen.” Waiandance then asked if “they that lived upon Long-Island might come to trade with us.” Gardener told him that the English could not risk trading with any Long Island Indians as long as they harbored any Pequots among them. However, Gardener advised him that “that if you will kill all the Pequits that come to you, and send me their heads, then I will give to you as to Weakwash [Wequash], and you shall have trade with us.” Waindance took this message to his brother, and within days, another messenger arrived bearing five Pequot heads.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Jennings, *Invasion*, 220-223; Cave, *Pequot War*, 151.



Waiandance was not the only sachem to turn over such gruesome trophies. John Mason recalled that “Happy were they that could bring in [Pequot] heads to the English: Of which there came almost daily to Windsor or Hartford.” Colonial authorities in Connecticut and Massachusetts encouraged as many Natives as they could to help hunt down Pequots, so as to avoid giving “breath to a beaten enemy, lest he return armed...with greater despite and revenge.” Wequah, Sassacus’s old rival, approached Lyon Gardener after the burning of Mystic and offered to tell him “how many of the Pequits were yet alive that had helped to kill Englishmen.” According to Roger Williams, Sequassen, a sachem in the Connecticut River Valley, “cut of twenty Pequot women and children” who they caught trying to reach the Mohawks in what is now the eastern part of upstate New York. These leaders had all determined that the English were the best way to remove the Pequots as “a viable and autonomous native community.” In so doing, they hoped to escape the authority of the Pequots, avoid the ire of the English, or, in the case of Uncas, strengthen their own regional power base.<sup>193</sup>

The day after Mystic, the Pequots called a council to consider their options. Sassacus and the council “propounded these three things...whether they would set upon a sudden revenge upon the Narragansetts, or attempt an enterprise upon the English, or fly.”<sup>194</sup> At the council meeting, Sassacus “was all for blood,” but his authority as Pequot grand sachem slipped away. Several tribal members charged “that he was the only Cause

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<sup>192</sup>Gardener, “Relation,” 137-138; Oberg, *Uncas*, 70.

<sup>193</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 39-40; Vincent, “True Relation,” 106; Roger Williams to John Winthrop, July 21, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 107; Oberg, *Uncas*, 70; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 115-121.

<sup>194</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 85; Cave, *Pequot War*, 156.

of all the Troubles that had befallen them; and therefore they would Destroy both him and his.” Sassacus was spared “by the Intreaty of their Counsellors” and his bonds of kinship to them. However, kinship did not save everyone. Some Mohegans lived among the Pequots, and the Pequots focused their vengeance upon them. The Pequots “cut off all the Mohigens that remain[ed] with them (lest they should turn to the English).” Seven escaped to Fort Saybrook. The council then sent one hundred warriors out to punish the Narragansetts for their part in the attack. However, the expedition was unsuccessful.<sup>195</sup>

While the council spared Sassacus’s life, the Pequots scattered amongst several neighboring Native peoples, and “spoiled all those goods they could not carry with them, broke up their tents and wigwams, and betook themselves to flight.”<sup>196</sup> At least seventy Pequots surrendered to the Narragansetts, while another hundred managed to reach Long Island and found refuge with the Montauks. Sassacus led the largest refugee group, which included most of the sachems and several hundred men, women, and children, westward in a desperate attempt to reach Mohawk territory in New York. The Narragansetts were convinced that Sassacus had purchased the Pequots’ safety with a substantial payment of wampum.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 85; Vincent, “True Relation,” 106; Mason, “Brief History,” 34-36; Cave, *Pequot War*, 157.

<sup>196</sup>Underhill, “Newes from America,” 85; Mason, “Brief History,” 36; Vincent, “True Relation,” 106; Cave, *Pequot War*, 157.

<sup>197</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 36; Roger Williams to John Winthrop, June 21, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 86; Roger Williams to John Winthrop, July 3, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 90; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 225-226; Israel Stoughton to John Winthrop, c. June 28, 1637, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 435; Daniel Patrick to the Governor and Council of War in Massachusetts, June 19, 1637, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 430-431; Kevin McBride, ““Ancient and Crazie”: Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present*, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1991), 66; Cave, *Pequot War*, 157; Jennings, *Invasion*, 226.

The Pequots' rush to the Mohawks generated many rumors, as the Mohawks reputation as fierce warriors generated fear throughout the region.<sup>198</sup> Roger Williams warned that the Mohawks were “the most savage, their weapons more dangerous, and their cruelty dreadfull.” If the Pequots created an alliance with the Mohawks, the war might turn again in their favor. As Sassacus's group crossed the Connecticut River, “they met with three English Men in a Shallop going for Saybrook,” and killed them. A group of about forty Pequots broke away from Sassacus, and turned back toward their home territory. They hid out in the cedar swamp just north of Weinshauks, a place known to the Pequots as Ohomowauke, meaning “Owl's Nest,” and Cuppacommock, or “Refuge/Hiding Place.” The swamp seemed a suitable refuge. The terrain was difficult to navigate, and swamps served as havens for Cheepi/Hobbamock — spirit of dreams, visions, the cold northeast wind, death, and the deceased. The hiding place lies within the bounds of the Mashantucket Pequot reservation.<sup>199</sup>

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As the Anglo-Algonquian forces waited outside of the burnt remains of Mystic, Mason feared reprisal from the Pequots at Weinshauks. They knew that the Pequots had superior numbers, and Mason's fears grew larger when most of the Narragansett warriors departed for their home territory. The Puritan force was thus left with only Uncas, his Mohegan warriors, and a small remnant of Narragansetts. Unable to take the Pequots'

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<sup>198</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 110-115; Jennings, *Invasion*, 226. Sassacus's dash to Mohawk territory may have been futile, given that the Mohawks dealt closely with the Narragansetts.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid; William S. Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986), 39.

major stronghold at Weinshauks, the reduced forces marched from the burnt-out remains of Mystic towards friendly territory.<sup>200</sup>

Pequot warriors, some from Weinshauks and some from smaller surrounding encampments, attacked the Anglo-Algonquian army using hit and run tactics. The Mohegans and the few remaining Narragansetts fought the Pequot warriors to keep them away from the exhausted English.<sup>201</sup> When the Native warriors engaged each other in battle, Underhill observed that “they came not near one another, but shot remote, and not point-blank, as we often do with our bullets.” The indiscriminate violence of English warfare shocked the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, but Native warfare left the English unimpressed. After the Mohegans and Narragansetts chased away the Pequots, Underhill commented that “this fight is more for pastime, than to conquer and subdue enemies.” John Mason was even more contemptuous. During later engagements between the Mohegans and the Pequots, Mason dismissed their “feeble Manner” of warfare, and declared that “it did hardly deserve the Name of Fighting.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 31; Cave, *Pequot War*, 154.

<sup>201</sup> According to Underhill, the English allowed them to do this so that they could “see the nature of the Indian war.” However, given the sorry state of Mason’s troops, “Provision and Muniton near spent; we in the enemies Country, who did far exceed us in Number, being much enraged...our Pinnaces at a great distance from us,” sheer exhaustion on the part of the English was reason enough for letting the Mohegans fight.

<sup>202</sup>As Michael Oberg and others have argued, Mason and Underhill did not understand the nature of Native warfare. Native peoples “fought for limited and specific purposes: to exact revenge, to extend a sachem’s authority, to contest a territorial boundary, or to acquire, but not destroy, another people.” The English manner of warfare, the killing of men, women, and children alike, was a savage exercise in the eyes of these Algonquian people. The massacre at Mystic vividly demonstrated for Southern New England Natives that the English could be unpredictable and deadly. Underhill, “Newes from America,” 82; Mason, “Brief History,” 31-32, 41; Cave, *Pequot War*, 153-154; Oberg, *Uncas*, 69; Paul Alden Robinson, “The Struggle Within: The Indian Debate in Seventeenth Century Narragansett Country” (diss., SUNY-Binghamton, 1990), 111; Adam J. Hirsch, “The Collision of Military Culture in Seventeenth-Century New England,” *Journal of American History* 74 (1988): 1187-1212; Karr, “Violence of the Pequot War,” 876-909; Harold E. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven, CT: 1990), 9; Patrick M.

As the Anglo-Algonquian forces made their way east, they turned toward the coast and saw English vessels “before a fair Gale of Wind, sailing into Pequot Harbour.” Mason recalled that it was a sight that met with “great Rejoycing” from the expedition. As the exhausted men hurried towards the ships, at least three hundred Pequot warriors dispatched from Weinshauks “immediately came up” to attack. Mason counterattacked, leading his strongest and best-armed men “to Skirmish with them,” but “chiefly to try what temper they were of.” Hesitant to engage with the better-armed English forces in a direct confrontation, the Pequots fell back.<sup>203</sup> However, this restraint proved temporary, once the warriors heard from the scouting party sent to Fort Mystic a quarter of a mile up the hill. When the party reached the burnt-out remains of the fort, and saw all of the men, women, and children lying dead on the ground, they “stamped and tore the Hair from their Heads.” Mason recalled that the Pequots “came mounting down the Hill upon us, in a full career, as if they would over run us.” The men in the rear of the retreating column turned around and “when they came within Shot...giving Fire upon them.” The enraged Pequots attacked in a confused and disorderly manner, giving the English the advantage. Several of the charging Pequots were hit, which “made the rest more wary.” The force then scattered, “running to and fro, and shooting their Arrows at Random.” However, these random attacks did no actual harm to the English. According to Mason, after having “taught them a little more Manners than to disturb us,” the English found the time to stop at “a small Brook, where we rested and refreshed our selves.”<sup>204</sup>

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Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among New England Indians* (Baltimore: 1991), 103, 105.

<sup>203</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 31-32; Cave, *Pequot War*, 154.

After their brief rest the army resumed its march, and “falling upon several Wigwams” they found along the way, they “burnt them.” The Pequots dogged the English the entire way, and set up small groups to “lay in Ambush behind Rocks and Trees, often shooting at us.” The English suffered no major casualties from these ambushes, due in large part to the efforts of Uncas and the Mohegans. The Mohegans kept the enraged Pequot warriors away from the exhausted and injured English troops. They also carried the English who were too wounded to walk on their own. The English and Mohegans soon developed a strategy to clear their path. “And as we came to any Swamp or Thicket,” Mason recalled, “we made some Shot to clear the Passage.” Mason observed that several Pequots “fell with our Shot; and probably more might, but for want of Munition.” When any of the Pequots fell, the Mohegans “would give a great Shout,” fall upon the body, and “then would they take so much Courage as to fetch their Heads.” This continued until the English and their allies were about two miles from Pequot Harbor on the Thames River, when the Pequots “gathered together and left us.” In a dramatic display of dominance, Mason and his men marched to the top of a hill and unfurled their banners. After this, the men “came to the Water-Side,” and “sat down in Quiet.”<sup>205</sup>

Mason and Underhill discovered that the ship that had come to their aid was the shallop that they had sailed to Narragansett Bay, only now it was commanded by Captain Daniel Patrick of Massachusetts Bay. Over the next few hours, Mason, Underhill, and Patrick argued over control the ship and how to transport the troops from the expedition.

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<sup>204</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 32; Cave, *Pequot War*, 154-155.

<sup>205</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 32-33.

The arguments were symptomatic of the continued friction between Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut; colonial leaders vied for control over the mission, and their conflicting agendas resulted in yet another series of miscommunications.<sup>206</sup> Underhill eventually took the small pinnance and set out for Saybrook. However, “before he [Underhill] was out of Sight,” Patrick changed his mind. He declared that “he must wait for the Bay [Colony] vessels at Saybrook,” and he also told Mason that he should secure his own Native allies. Given the weakened state of his own forces, Mason declared that this task “at first seemed very Difficult, if not Impossible.” However, “absolutely neccesitated to March by Land,” Mason set out with his men, Uncas and his Mohegans, and accompanied by the remaining Narragansetts. Captain Patrick then changed his mind again, and marched with them to Saybrook.<sup>207</sup> The English forces reached the east side of the Connecticut River and camped there for the night. The next morning, they “were all fetched over to Saybrook, receiving many Courtesies from Lieut. Gardener.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Captain Patrick “was sent with Forty Men” to raid Block Island, which the Pequots had seized the previous spring. After their successful mission, they had come to Pequot Harbor “to Rescue us, supposing we were pursued.” The joy at seeing the reinforcements was brief, as Mason and Underhill soon clashed with Captain Patrick. Patrick at first refused to make room for the wounded members of the force. Patrick relented, but after the wounded troops were brought on board, Patrick and Underhill quarreled again. This fight may once again, be indicative of the jurisdictional clash between Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut. Underhill and Patrick launched into a shouting match, or as Mason saw it, “a great Contest” that “grew to a great Height,” over who should command the vessel. It was agreed “that if Patrick would Ride there with that Bark [ship] in Contention, and secure the Narragansett Indians” that remained with the English from any Pequot attacks, Underhill would transport the “Wounded Men to Saybrook five Leagues distant” in a small pinnance. After he dropped the wounded off at Saybrook, Underhill would return to Pequot Harbor, pick up the Narragansetts, and then take them home. At first Captain Patrick “seemed very readily to accept” the compromise, but after Underhill left, he argued again with Mason. Mason, “Brief History,” 33-34; Daniel Patrick to John Winthrop, May 23, 1637, *Winthrop Papers*, 3: 421; Cave, *Pequot War*, 155.

<sup>207</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 34; Cave, *Pequot War*, 156.

<sup>208</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 34-35; Cave, *Pequot War*, 156.

Flush with their barely achieved victory, colonial authorities in Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay recommitted to permanently end the Pequot “threat,” and secure the Pequots’ territory for themselves. In June of 1637, Massachusetts Bay sent Israel Stoughton and William Trask to Connecticut with one hundred and twenty men. Fueled by this influx of new troops, the war spiraled to a close; the English and their Native allies steadily picked off the runaway Pequots. The Mohegans captured several Pequots “and by them delivered to the Massachusetts Soldiers,” while Stoughton himself led a party that captured the small Pequot group that had hidden out at Ohomowauke. Uncas and the Mohegans pursued Sassacus and the majority of the Pequots over land. The Pequot refugees were slowed by “their Children and want of Provision; being forced to dig for Clams, and to procure such other things as the Wilderness afforded.” Uncas and the Mohegans easily captured the Pequot stragglers, as did Narragansetts war parties.<sup>209</sup>

Stoughton marched to Saybrook and joined his Bay Colony forces with Mason’s squadron of forty Connecticut troops. The majority of the English forces then traveled by sea to Quinnipiac, later called New Haven Harbor. As soon as they landed, the English captured a small party of Pequots who had been watching them; two were executed and two were spared. One of the men the English spared, whom they named Luz, kept his

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<sup>209</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 225-227; De Forest, *Indians of Connecticut*, 145; Mason, “Brief History,” 36; Gardener, “Relation,” 137-138; Cave, *Pequot War*, 158-159. The Mohegans likely captured more Pequots than they turned over to the English, as they incorporated them into their own communities. The Narragansetts also turned over some Pequot captives to Stoughton, but they urged the English to treat the captives “kindly,” and return the land and property to those Pequots who surrendered peacefully. However, Stoughton was not as merciful toward the other prisoners; he executed nearly thirty of the Pequot men, and enslaved the women and children. The captives who tried to escape were recaptured by the Puritans’ Native allies, and “branded on the soldier.” Thirty of the captives were given to the Narragansetts, the Massachusetts Indians received three, while the rest were sent to Boston. Of the prisoners taken by the English, some were eventually sold to slave traders and sent down to the West Indies.



life by agreeing to lead the English to Sassacus.<sup>210</sup> Sassacus and his followers abandoned their camp and went on the run again. On July 14, 1637, the English discovered a large contingent of Pequots near “a most hideous swamp, so thick with bushes and so quagmire, as men could hardly crowd into it.” When the English reached a hilltop, they “saw several Wigwams just opposite, only a Swamp intervening, which was almost divided in two Parts.” The Pequots, sought refuge in the later-named Sadque swamp, and abandoned the twenty or so wigwams. Lieutenant Davenport led a small group of Englishmen into the swamp, and when they “were there set upon by several Indians,” who launched arrows at them and then charged the English. Davenport’s men “slew but few,” but “two or three of themselves were Wounded.”<sup>211</sup>

The English quickly surrounded the swamp and they offered the Pequots the chance to surrender. The Pequots had taken refuge with another group of Natives “belonging to that Place,” and the English hoped to avoid killing noncombatants. The English then tapped Thomas Stanton, Gardener’s interpreter at Saybrook, to approach the Natives in the swamp and negotiate. Stanton assured the Natives that anyone not guilty of killing Englishmen would be spared. After about two hours, nearly “Two Hundred old Men, Women and Children,” came out and “delivered themselves, to the Mercy of the English.” However, most of the Pequot warriors refused to surrender and remained in the swamp. The battle raged throughout the night; some of the Pequot warriors shot by the English drowned in the mud of the swamp. The fighting continued until “about half an Hour before Day,” when some sixty or seventy warriors broke through Patrick’s lines.

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<sup>210</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 37.

<sup>211</sup>Mason, “Brief History,” 37-38; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 226-228; Cave, *Pequot War*, 160.

Some of the Pequots escaped with their lives, but many were struck down by English guns, and others were found dead the following day along the trail out of the swamp. The English forces then divided the spoils. They seized the Pequots' wampum, as well as some trays and kettles, and then turned their attention to the two hundred Natives who had surrendered. The Connecticut and Bay Colony soldiers released the twenty non-Pequots, and divided the one hundred and eighty Pequots, "to keep them as Servants."<sup>212</sup>

Sassacus reached the Hudson River Valley with only his councilman Mononotto and about forty warriors and their families. The ragged sachem sought refuge and aid among the Mohawks; given the Mohawks' reputation for being fierce warriors and "the most terrible to their neighbors of all these nations," the English feared such a prospect. However, instead of allies, Sassacus found that "the Pequots now became a Prey to all Indians." The Mohawks did not wish to ally themselves with a lost cause like Sassacus. "In contemplation of the English," and in act of self-interest, Mohawk warriors attacked the party. The Mohawks killed Sassacus and "cut off his head and sent it to Hartford." They also killed "his brother and five other Pequot sachems, who, being fled to the Mohawk for shelter, with their women, were by them surprised and slain, with twenty of their best men." With the death of the grand sachem, the slaughter of hundreds of Pequots, and the capture of hundreds more, the Pequot War was over.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup>Mason, "Brief History," 38-39; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 227-229; Cave, *Pequot War*, 160-161.

<sup>213</sup>Mason, "Brief History," 39-40; Vincent, "True Relation," 107; Gardener, "Relation," 138; Winthrop, *Journal*, 1: 227-229; Roger Williams to John Winthrop, July 3, 1637, in Williams, *Correspondence*, 1: 90; Cave, *Pequot War*, 161; Jennings, *Invasion*, 226.

The human tragedy of the Pequot War cannot be underestimated.<sup>214</sup> Political rivalries and circumstances had allied against the Pequots, and the tribe suffered devastating losses as a result. Over months of fighting, hundreds of Pequots had died. Hundreds more had scattered throughout the region; the majority were captured, imprisoned, or enslaved by the victorious English, Mohegans, and Narragansetts. The survivors faced an uncertain future. Though they won the war, the English, Mohegans, and Narragansetts faced the much more complicated challenge of administering the “peace.” Each polity claimed the Pequots’ territory, and each committed itself to absorbing as many of the surviving Pequots as they could manage. The English desired the Pequots as servants, either within the colonies or down in the West Indies, while the Algonquians incorporated Pequot individuals and towns into their confederations so as to expand their populations and power base. A delicate balancing act soon followed, as each group, and each leader, sought advancement without triggering another war.

Cassacinamon assumed leadership after the war, and faced the monumental task of rebuilding Pequot communities. The war, and Sassacus’s failures, proved that the Pequots needed a strong English ally to champion their cause among colonial power brokers. The Pequots could not solely rely on Algonquian political tactics; they required access to both Algonquian and English systems in order to protect themselves. The war also demonstrated the necessity of controlling the flow of information. Controlling all pertinent information allowed the Pequots to promote their own agenda, and prevented others from manipulating it against them. And while Pequot communities favored Pequot leaders, those leaders must be capable individuals. The Pequots could not rebuild

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<sup>214</sup>Jennings, *Invasion*, 220-223; Cave, *Pequot War*, 151.

until they addressed all those issues. The will of the Pequots to survive, combined with the conflicting agendas and jurisdictional struggles of the Mohegans, Narragansetts, Connecticut, and Massachusetts Bay, set Cassacinamon's leadership agenda as sachem. But it was an agenda set in pain, and suffering, and blood.

### Chapter 3: The Pequot Robin

On July 23, 1638, Roger Williams wrote to Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay, to discuss the latest scheme orchestrated by the Mohegan grand sachem Uncas. Uncas had dispatched envoys to the Winthrop home in Massachusetts Bay with explicit instructions to “buy one of the [Pequot] maidens” being held there. The woman in question came from a prominent Pequot family but she had been forced, as punishment after the Pequot War, to serve in the Winthrop household. Uncas sought her as his latest wife, anticipating access to her hereditary titles and lands. If the Native delegation could not buy her freedom from Winthrop, one of the delegates was to stay at the home to “perswade and worck their Escape.” The envoy consisted of nine Mohegans and “the Pequot [Pequot] Robin.” “The Pequot Robin” was Robin Cassacinamon, and he remained with the Winthrops to ensure that the deal closed. Cassacinamon succeeded; Uncas got his bride, and Cassacinamon received a payment of ten fathoms of wampum, an award equal to the maximum bride price for a sachem’s daughter.<sup>215</sup>

This exchange marks the first time Robin Cassacinamon appears by name in the historical record. The episode reveals much about the social and political state of the southern New England Anglo-Algonquian frontier following the Pequot War. After the Pequots’ power collapsed in 1637, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, the Mohegans, the Niantics, and the Narragansetts scrambled to fill the void left behind. In late 1637 and

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<sup>215</sup>“To John Winthrop, 23 July 1638,” Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams 1629-1653*, ed. Glen W. LaFantasie (Hanover and London: Brown University Press, 1988), 2 Volumes, I: 168 (Hereafter *RWC*); Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* [1643], John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 206.

early 1638, neither Natives nor English controlled the southern New England Anglo-Algonquian frontier. Powerful Algonquian leaders like Uncas, Miantonomi, and Ninigret incorporated the Pequot survivors into their own confederations and used them to strengthen their own confederations. For their part, the colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay claimed Pequot lands by right of conquest and argued over claims to the Pequots' former territories for years. It was a period of dramatic transition.<sup>216</sup>

Yet even in this chaos, seeds were planted for the Pequots' reemergence. While hundreds of Pequots died during the war, the survivors continued to play "an important role in the intercultural politics of the region as Englishmen and Indians worked to reshape the postwar world."<sup>217</sup> That Pequots had survived the war, and that these survivors still had an important role in regional politics, proved foundations on which to build. Robin Cassacinamon was essential to this rebuilding, positioned as he was to exploit these competing Algonquian and English interests. Connected to all the major

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<sup>216</sup>For analysis of the Pequot War and the social and political aftermath that impacted New England Anglo-Indian relations, see Alfred Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) ; Eric S. Johnson, "Uncas and the Politics of Contact," and Kevin McBride, "The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period," in *Northeast Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, edited by Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 29-47, 74-92; Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 72; Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975); Charles Orr, ed., *History of the Pequot War: The Contemporary Accounts of Mason, Underhill, Vincent and Gardener*, reprinted from the *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Cleveland: The Helman-Taylor Company, 1897); Eric Spencer Johnson, "Some by Flatteries and Others by Threatenings: Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1993); Michael L. Fickes, "They Could Not Endure That Yoke": The Captivity of Pequot Women and Children after the War of 1637" in *New England Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1, March 2000, 76. ; Wendy B. St. Jean, "Inventing Guardianship: The Mohegan Indians and Their "Protectors", *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 72, Issue 3, 1999, 366; Ronald Dale Karr, "Why Should You Be So Furious?": The Violence of the Pequot War," in *The Journal of American History*, December 1998, 898.

<sup>217</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 72.

players in Connecticut — the Pequot survivors, Uncas and the Mohegans, the Narragansetts, and the English via the powerful Winthrop family — Cassacinamon used all of these groups to reestablish distinct Pequot communities. Cassacinamon and the Pequots exploited the seventeenth-century strategies outlined in Eric Spencer Johnson’s work, and utilized tactics of alliances, ideology, settlement patterns, and coercion and to navigate these conflicting political goals and pursue their own agenda.<sup>218</sup>

Cassacinamon’s skills made him an essential part of regional negotiations between these Algonquian and English polities. In doing so, he served as the strongest possible advocate for the surviving Pequots. By operating in the gaps and intersections where these polities met, Cassacinamon and the Pequots carved out a place for themselves within the regional social and political power structure.

## I

The months following the Pequot War were marked by intense social and political intrigue. Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut primarily concerned themselves with acquiring the Pequots’ former lands. Both the Bay Colony and the River Colony claimed the territory by right of conquest, and each hoped to gain control over the region’s wampum production and acquire more land for their expanding populations. On June 2, 1637, the Connecticut General Court at Hartford ordered “there shalbe sent forth 30 men out of the sevrall plantacons in this River of Conectecott to sett downe in the Pequitt Country & River in place convenient to maynteine or right yt God by Conquest hath given to us.” Meanwhile, Massachusetts Bay leaders argued that they were owed

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<sup>218</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” vi, 132-138. Johnson examined ideology, alliance, marriage, coercion, settlement, exchange, and the manipulation of material culture as distinct Native American political strategies.

compensation for their part in the Pequot War, declaring that Connecticut would have lost “had not we rescued them at so many hundred charges.”<sup>219</sup> However, neither colony could achieve these goals “without the assistance of the native communities that had already been working to shape the region in ways that accorded with Indian political and social practice.” In recognition of that fact, each colony strengthened alliances with a confederation. Massachusetts Bay turned to Miantonomi and the Narragansetts, while the Mohegans and Uncas became the principal ally of Connecticut.<sup>220</sup>

The pertinent issue for the Mohegans and Narragansetts concerned the fate of the surviving Pequots.<sup>221</sup> Colonial authorities and their Native allies had captured several hundred Pequots during the war, and the English claimed nearly three hundred Pequots as servants or slaves. Pequot captives were distributed as servants to prominent colonial families in Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, and Rhode Island, while others were shipped to the sugar plantations in Bermuda.<sup>222</sup> For their part, the Mohegans, Narragansetts, and

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<sup>219</sup>J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), 1: 10 (Hereafter *CR*); Roger Williams to John Winthrop, 21 June 1637, *RCW*, 1: 86-87; *Winthrop Papers*, 1498-1654, ed. Allyn B. Forbes et al., 6 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-92), “Thomas Hooker to John Winthrop, December 1638,” *WP*, 4: 76 (Hereafter *WP*).

<sup>220</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 73; “Thomas Hooker to John Winthrop, December 1638,” *WP*, 4:76; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England*, 5 Volumes, (Boston, 1853), 1: 216 (Hereafter *MBR*); *CR*: 1:10; Roger Williams to John Winthrop, 21 June 1637, *RWC*, 1:86-87.

<sup>221</sup>“September 1645,” Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England 1643-1651, in *Plymouth Colonial Records*, Vol. IX (Boston: William White, 1859; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1968), 51 (Hereafter *Acts*).

<sup>222</sup>John Winthrop, “History of New England,” *Winthrop’s Journal, 1630-1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 1: 225; “Israel Stoughton to John Winthrop,” *WP*, 3: 435; Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero’s America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 95; Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 211-212. As Bragdon notes in her study, the conditions of Native servants were



Niantics absorbed any Pequots they could find; sometimes they informed the colonial authorities about it, and sometimes they did not. Incorporating Pequot survivors strengthened these Algonquian confederations depopulated by disease and war. Given the extent to which marriage and kinship interconnected these Natives, in all likelihood, the Mohegans, Narragansetts, and Niantics not only absorbed Pequots, they took in relatives.<sup>223</sup> In the seventeenth century, Native “tribes” were mainly collections of independent villages, held together by various social, political, and cultural links.<sup>224</sup> Individuals and families joined existing villages within these confederations. However, whole Pequot villages also remained intact. This familiar arrangement permitted Pequot survivors to live in their own communities; they just owed allegiance to a new principal sachem.<sup>225</sup>

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often harsh. Nearly one thousand Natives were enslaved or indentured among English settlers of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island by the eighteenth century.

<sup>223</sup>John Mason, “A Brief History of the Pequot War: Especially of the Memorable Taking of their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637-Written by Major John Mason, a principal Actor therein, as then chief Captain and Commander of Connecticut Forces” (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1736), in Orr, *History of the Pequot War*, 1-46; Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 95; Bragdon, *Native People*, 208-211.

<sup>224</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 22; Kevin McBride, “‘Ancient and Crazie’: Pequot Lifeways During the Historic Period” in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present*, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1991), 65-66; Bert Salwen, “Indians of Southern New England and Long Island Sound: Early Period,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (hereafter *Handbook*) (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 166; William M. Starna, “The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 39, 43; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 41-42; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: 1986), 41; Peter A. Thomas, “Bridging the Cultural Gap: Indian/White Relations,” in *Early Settlement in the Connecticut Valley*, ed. Stephen Innes (Deerfield, MA: 1984), 5; Paul Alden Robinson, “The Struggle Within: The Indian Debate in Seventeenth Century Narragansett Country” (PhD dissertation, SUNY Binghamton, 1990), 48-49.

<sup>225</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 43, 87-88.

The Mohegans' treatment of the Pequots exemplified this pattern. Roger Williams reported that twenty wigwams were located at a village identified as "Pequot Nayantaquit," where Uncas spent a great deal of time when he was away from his principal village of Shantok. Even more Pequot villages were spread throughout Mohegan territory: another twenty Pequot homes were located at Tatuppequauog (near present day Waterford, CT), fifteen were at Paupattokshick, ten at Sauquunckackock, and eight wigwams were located upriver along the Thames at Maugunckakuck.<sup>226</sup> Though forced to join the Mohegan confederation, by maintaining their own towns the Pequots fostered a sense of segregation from others in the confederation. This separation helped the Pequots sustain a sense of their own uniqueness as Pequots. They simply needed a way to express that identity and affiliation publicly and safely.

However, while the Pequots retained their own villages, they remained at the mercy of their new "masters," and these new authorities kept from the Pequots from their former territories. In the summer of 1639, a group of Pequots, tributaries of the Niantic sachem Ninigret, resettled in the Pequots' former territory along the Pawcatuck River. In an attempt to undercut Ninigret, Uncas informed Connecticut officials about this resettlement; the Mohegan sachem claimed it was done with the full knowledge and support of Ninigret. Upon learning that Pequots had "planted againe [in] part of the land which was conquered by us," Connecticut magistrates sent John Mason out to the site with forty men. Uncas and one hundred and fifty Mohegan warriors joined Mason's forces, and together they set out to destroy the Pequot village and "gather the Corne there

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<sup>226</sup>Roger Williams to John Winthrop, 10 September 1638, *RWC*, 1: 180; Oberg, *Uncas*, 82.

planted by them.”<sup>227</sup> When the Connecticut-Mohegan forces advanced on the Pequots, they fled the village. As the Mohegans gathered the villagers’ corn, sixty Pequots broke from their hiding places and charged the invaders. The Mohegans waited until the Pequots were within thirty yards, and then, “giving a war whoop, the Mohegans rushed to meet the charging Pequots.” Mason and the English forces moved to cut off the Pequots, but as soon as they saw this, the Pequots fled. The expedition captured seven Pequot. Uncas kept the prisoners, adding them to his own growing population of Pequot tributaries.<sup>228</sup>

The 1639 episode revealed that the Pequot survivors were eager to return to their homeland, and that they still maintained viable communities. However, it also proved that despite those desires, the Pequots could never safely return to their lands unless they first resolved their post-war situation. Without a well-connected political leader, a sachem who legitimized their claims and negotiated on their behalf, the Pequots remained vulnerable to the machinations of Uncas, Ninigret, and others.

The Mohegans and Narragansetts agreed to pay an annual tribute for the Pequot survivors they spared and to execute those Pequots responsible for killing English colonists.<sup>229</sup> This agreement facilitated the execution of most of the remaining Pequot sachems, allowing for the emergence of Cassacinamon. Uncas and Miantonomi could not allow any belligerent Pequot sachems to survive, since the sachems might encourage

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<sup>227</sup>CR, 1: 32; Herbert Milton Sylvester, *Indian Wars of New England*, 3 volumes (Cleveland: 1910), 1: 360; Benjamin Trumbull, *A Complete History of Connecticut*, 2 volumes (New London, CT: 1898), 1: 8-86; Oberg, *Uncas*, 91.

<sup>228</sup>CR, 1: 32; Trumbull, *Connecticut*, 1: 85-86; Oberg, *Uncas*, 91-92.

<sup>229</sup>RCW, I: 184.

the Pequots to flee from the Mohegans and Narragansetts. Only six of the original twenty-six Pequot sachems mentioned at the start of the war survived it. Their survival was likely due to their cooperation with the Mohegans and Narragansetts; they entered into subordinate tributary relationships with the more powerful confederations as was the Algonquian custom.<sup>230</sup>

Purging the traditional Pequot leadership not only removed rivals for Uncas and Miantonomi, it created the necessary circumstances that aided Cassacinamon in his ascent to the sachemship. Cassacinamon's survival during these purges suggests that he was not an office-holding sachem during the war otherwise he would have been on the initial lists.<sup>231</sup> However, the fact that Cassacinamon *became* the Pequots' leader during the 1640s suggests that he held a legitimate claim to the position of sachem. The destruction and social chaos caused by the war enabled capable people, regardless of their social stature, to ascend the political ladder. However, the fact that Cassacinamon was recognized as a leader by his own people and by the Mohegans and Narragansetts, suggests that he possessed the necessary skills *and* the hereditary claims to the office. The surviving Pequots might not have followed Cassacinamon had he not possessed a hereditary claim to leadership.<sup>232</sup>

Uncas sided with the English during the Pequot War to remove the Pequots as an obstacle to his own ambitions. After the war ended, Uncas maintained his alliance with John Mason. Roger Williams noted that Native peoples had "Protectors, under *Sachims*,

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<sup>230</sup> The other twenty Pequot sachems were either killed during the war itself, or during one of the post-war purges. McBride, "Legacy," 75; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 87-88.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 81; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 103-110.

to whom they also carry presents, and upon any injury received, and complaint made, these Protectors will revenge it.”<sup>233</sup> Mason was not only an ally; he enforced Uncas’s will, as much as Uncas served as an agent of Mason’s. It was a political masterstroke for Uncas to build an alliance with a man feared by the Algonquians. Uncas used that against groups like the Niantics to bolster his own expansionist efforts.<sup>234</sup>

The second part of Uncas’s plan involved the widows of the Pequot sachems, and it is in this context Cassacinamon first appears in the colonial records. After the Pequot War, Uncas, the Niantic-Narragansett sachem Ninigret, and the Niantic-Pequot Wequashcook (son of the Niantic-Pequot Wequash) married as many of the wives and daughters of deceased Pequot sachems as they could arrange. Wequashcook married the mother of the Pequot grand sachem Sassacus, and by 1640 Uncas boasted at least six or seven wives, including Tatobem’s widow.<sup>235</sup> These post-war power brokers claimed the hereditary titles, lands, and tribute through such strategic marriages to these Pequot women.<sup>236</sup> Marriage to these Pequot noblewomen granted access to Pequot holdings, but it also served another purpose. These marriages were but one strategy used by sachems to legitimize their authority and incorporate indigenous communities into their confederations. While economic and military arrangements typified European alliances, intermarriage and kinship often solidified seventeenth-century indigenous alliances.<sup>237</sup> According to Kevin McBride, the chief archaeologist of the Mashantucket Pequots, this

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<sup>233</sup>Williams, *Key*, 141.

<sup>234</sup>St. Jean, “Inventing Guardianship,” 366.

<sup>235</sup>*RCW*, I: 119, 168-168, 202; Johnson, “Uncas and the Politics of Contact,” 40.

<sup>236</sup>McBride, “Legacy,” 75.

<sup>237</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 162-188.

served as a way of “eliminating [major] Pequot leadership while keeping the basic social structure intact.”<sup>238</sup> By engaging in a well-established Algonquian social custom, a custom that the surviving Pequots accepted, Uncas and the others hoped to ease their transition into this new socio-political relationship. Uncas expected these marriages to send a message to the other tribes in the region, so acquiring another Pequot wife would have been a vital mission carried out with the utmost urgency. Uncas pursued Pequot women anywhere he could find them, even those who had become English servants.<sup>239</sup> This is why Uncas sent the delegation that included Cassacinamon to the Winthrop household in July 1638.

Uncas’s selection of Cassacinamon for the diplomatic mission suggests something important about Cassacinamon’s place within the regional Algonquian social and political structure. It is clear that Cassacinamon and the Mohegans who accompanied him owed fealty to Uncas. It is doubtful that Uncas sent “commoners” to the home of John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and widely recognized as a preeminent figure within the New England colonies.<sup>240</sup> This mission constituted an exchange between leaders, and the delegation represented Uncas’s authority and power to an official counterpart. However, Williams’ specific reference to Cassacinamon as “the Pequot Robin” is important. As the only member of Uncas’s delegation to be singled out and identified, Cassacinamon performed a vital role in the mission’s success. Entrusting

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<sup>238</sup>McBride, “Legacy,” 75.

<sup>239</sup>Fickes, “They Could Not Endure That Yoke,” 76.

<sup>240</sup>Thomas Franklin Waters, *A Sketch of the Life of John Winthrop, the Younger, founder of Ipswich, Massachusetts, in 1633* (Cambridge: John Wilson and son, printed for the Ipswich Historical Society, 1899), 1. John Winthrop served as governor of Massachusetts Bay from 1630-1634, 1637-1640, 1642-1644, and 1646-1649. He died on March 26, 1649.

Cassacinamon with such an important task can be interpreted as a signal that Uncas intended to fully incorporate the Pequots into his confederation.<sup>241</sup> Evidently, Uncas was satisfied with the results. Cassacinamon may also have been related to the woman in question, which meant that he too, shared claims to important Pequot social titles and authority. If Cassacinamon and the woman were kin, this could explain why Uncas chose Cassacinamon over any other Pequot candidates to retrieve the noblewoman. After Uncas obtained the woman, he awarded Cassacinamon ten fathoms of wampum. The reward was significant; it equaled the bride price often paid for a sachem's daughter. Having no legitimate reason to execute Cassacinamon, and exploiting any potential hereditary claims or community ties he possessed, Uncas used Cassacinamon as a link between the Mohegans and the incorporated Pequots.<sup>242</sup>

Another clue to Cassacinamon's social status may be found in the name/title bestowed to him in Williams's letter, "the Pequot Robin." Cassacinamon was his Pequot name, and the colonial documents referred to him as such, albeit with various spellings.<sup>243</sup> However, he was just as often addressed by the name/title of "Robin."<sup>244</sup> Some scholars have theorized that Cassacinamon acquired the additional title because his mark, the symbol with which he signed documents, looked like a robin when viewed a certain way.<sup>245</sup> However, English colonists frequently bestowed nicknames on

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<sup>241</sup>McBride, "Legacy," 79.

<sup>242</sup>"To John Winthrop, 23 July 1638," *RWC*, I: 168.

<sup>243</sup> Some spellings of the name include "Cassacinamon," "Cassasinamon," "Casamon," and "Casasynomon." He was even referred to as "Seano."

<sup>244</sup>"To John Winthrop, 23 July 1638," *RWC*, I: 168. Subsequent documents, such as letters and petitions, sometimes refer to Cassacinamon as "Robin, Mr. Winthrops Indyan."

Native leaders they encountered, with “Robin” a common designation. According to anthropologist Harold E. L. Prins, the name “Robin” invoked a very specific cultural reference for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English people.<sup>246</sup> In English folk culture, “Robin” referred specifically to the English folk figure Robin Hood. Thanks to films, television, and popular literature, Robin Hood is a dashing and noble hero who, accompanied by his “merry men,” robbed from the rich to give to the poor.<sup>247</sup>

However, in seventeenth-century English ballads and songs, Robin Hood possessed darker connotations; he exalted lawlessness and abandon. During the spring May Fair festivities, Robin Hood was associated with an archery game and the Morris dance, a folk dance of rural English origin. One man was chosen as the May Fair’s “Lord of Misrule,” he reigned over the games, dances, and “rabble-rousing revelries” of the crowds.<sup>248</sup> The May Fairs offered a socially acceptable opportunity for common folk to

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<sup>245</sup>Kevin A. McBride, interview by author, tape recording, Mashantucket, CT, July 2008. According to Dr. McBride, some scholars support the idea that Cassacinamon’s mark looks like a robin, while others argue that some versions of the mark look like a coiled snake.

<sup>246</sup>Harold R.L. Prins, “Chief Rawandagon, Alias Robin Hood: Native “Lord of Misrule” in the Maine Wilderness,” in *Northeast Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, edited by Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 93-115. Prins analyzes the life and career of a New England Algonquian contemporary of Cassacinamon, an Abenaki sachem/sagamore named Rawandagon, who was given the nickname “Robin Hood” by Englishmen living in Maine. While Prins focuses his analysis on this one sagamore, many Native leaders were given the nickname of “Robin” at this time. Therefore, Prins’s theories as to the meanings behind the nickname offer some key insights that may possibly explain why Cassacinamon received it as well.

<sup>247</sup>Prins, “Alias Robin Hood,” 103.

<sup>248</sup>Prins, “Alias Robin Hood,” 103. For a deeper examination of the role of Robin Hood in English folk culture see the following works: Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984); Francis Douce, “A Dissertation on the Ancient English Morris Dance” in *A Lyetell Geste of Robin Hose, with Other Ancient & Modern Ballads and Songs Relating to this Celebrated Yeoman*. 5 volumes. J.M. Gutch, ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1847), 1:329-65; J.C. Holt, “The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood” in *Peasants, Knights, and Heretics: Studies in Medieval English Social History*, Rodney H. Hilton, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 236-257; J.C. Holt, *Robin Hood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).



act like “wild men,” and their Lord of Misrule was Robin Hood. However, to Puritan eyes these Robin Hoods were insolent fools and devils who wore garish costumes and led ragtag groups of barbarians. When Cassacinamon and the Mohegans traveled to Winthrop’s house, they likely wore their ceremonial costumes; adorned with wampum beads and important pieces of jewelry, with feathers in their hair, and painted faces. Their attire would not appeal to the Puritan aesthetic. Therefore, Roger Williams’ designation of Cassacinamon as “the Pequot Robin” may have been a double-edged sword: it singled Cassacinamon out as a Pequot leader, but it also suggested he oversaw a subordinate community of lawless, funny-looking “wild men.”<sup>249</sup>

After 1638, Cassacinamon does not appear in the written records again until 1645. While his exact activities are unknown during those years, some bits of crucial information can be pieced together. Cassacinamon lived in John Winthrop’s household during this time, and learned English well enough to spend the rest of his life as an interpreter and intermediary between the Algonquians and the English. By the mid-1640s, Cassacinamon came to lead the Pequot community at Nameag, a village along the Connecticut coast that was part of Uncas’s Mohegan confederation that housed several hundred Pequots by the late 1640s.<sup>250</sup> These tantalizing clues further support the notion

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<sup>249</sup>Prins, “Alias Robin Hood,” 103-105. Prins focused his analysis on the English settlements of the Maine coast, which was settled primarily by non-Calvinist Protestants and various other English fishermen, pirates, felons, renegades, social dissidents, and other rowdy characters. They were, in Prins’ mind, the kind of people who would eagerly embrace the nicknames and bawdy nature of English folk culture, which is why they gave these nicknames to the Natives they encountered. As a Puritan, Roger Williams would have disapproved of such common debauchery. However as someone who had lived in England, there is a good chance he was familiar with the slang and nicknames, even if he himself did not partake in the folk culture that generated those names.

that Cassacinamon was a person of status within the Pequot community, and that everyone — Pequot, Mohegan, and English — had use for him. Cassacinamon, as a Pequot sachem linked to all three major groups in Connecticut, utilized these resources to enact his own agenda: the removal of the Pequots from Uncas's confederation.

After he secured the release of the Pequot noblewoman, Cassacinamon volunteered to serve in the Winthrop household. Cassacinamon's service was likely not devoted toward manual labor. Most of the Pequot captives living with the colonists were women and children, individuals who could be "trained" to do the household duties of colonial women.<sup>251</sup> Although few Pequot men entered into the service of English colonists, those who did served as interpreters for the English.<sup>252</sup> Skilled Native interpreters were a valued and needed asset at this time. Even Pequots, despite any negative feelings the English held towards them, were tapped as interpreters if they demonstrated sufficient language skills. Yet, although interpreters fulfilled an essential function on the frontier, the English frequently expressed frustrations over their dependency on indigenous interpreters. Colonial authorities feared and distrusted these intermediaries, as often as they expressed the need for their services. Their necessity gave these interpreters a distinct political advantage; such advantages could easily be

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<sup>250</sup>Kevin McBride, "Legacy," 81; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 132-138; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 103, 105. Woodward believes that several hundred Pequots lived at Nameag, which would have made it a center of Pequot identity and resistance.

<sup>251</sup>Fickes, "They Could Not Endure That Yoke," 65.

<sup>252</sup>*Winthrop's Journal: "History of New England," 1630-1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1908), 2: 7 (Hereafter *Journal*); Fickes, "They Could Not Endure That Yoke," 62; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 108.

exploited by opportunistic individuals. If an interpreter's loyalty could be secured in some way, English anxieties lessened.<sup>253</sup>

As one of the leading families in New England, the Winthrop's certainly appreciated this kind of service from a willing Pequot volunteer. As for Cassacinamon, living in the home of a man as well-connected as John Winthrop presented an invaluable opportunity. Multilingualism was a skill encouraged by Native cultural practices, "including the fostering of high-status children from allied sachemships, intermarriage among the elites of these same groups, and possibly the presence of captives adopted into the community or used there as slaves."<sup>254</sup> Such multilingual interpreters served as important nexuses between the different villages and confederations in the region; it made sense to incorporate the English into this network. The chance to learn about how the colonists lived, and more importantly, to discern which colonists had influence, provided Cassacinamon with an opening to make connections with powerful English figures. During these "missing years," Cassacinamon seized upon that opportunity and forged an alliance with John Winthrop Jr.

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<sup>253</sup>"A Pequot maid who could speak English perfectly" was used by Massachusetts Bay as an interpreter during negotiations with Miantonomi in November 1640. Miantonomi first refused to work with the interpreter, who he recognized and did not trust, but later acquiesced to her presence. William Bradford to John Winthrop, 16 August 1640, *WP*, 4: 273; Winthrop, *Journal*, 336-337; Paul Alden Robinson, "Lost Opportunities: Miantonomi and the English in the Seventeenth-Century Narragansett Country," in *Northeastern Indian Lives*, 26; James H. Merrell, "'The Customes of Our Countrey': Indians and Colonists in Early America," in *"Strangers within the Realm": Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 108-109. For essays that examine the phenomenon of cultural brokers, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

<sup>254</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 205; Kathleen Bragdon, "'Another Tongue Brought In': An Ethnohistorical Study of Native Writings in Massachusetts," Ph.D. dissertation (Brown University, 1981).

Although inconclusive, the evidence suggests that this alliance moved beyond simple political expedience. The Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance proved substantial and lasted for several decades, with Cassacinamon and the younger Winthrop offering what appears to be unwavering support of one another. At its face, the Cassacinamon-Winthrop coalition is not unusual; such alliances were a common political strategy, and as the Pequot War proved, an essential one.<sup>255</sup> Seen in this light, Cassacinamon's alliance with John Winthrop Jr. proved to be nothing out of the ordinary. Any competent Native leader realized that an alliance with a powerful Englishman yielded strategic benefits.<sup>256</sup>

However, on the surface, the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance appeared to be an imbalanced one. Winthrop Jr. was a man of means and ambition. He came from a leading Puritan family and had political connections throughout New England. By 1646, Cassacinamon only led a single community, his people decimated and cast aside. This did not appear to be an alliance of equals, and Cassacinamon was sometimes referred to as "Robin, Mr. Winthrops Indyan," a title that reinforced this concept of an imbalanced relationship.<sup>257</sup> Connecticut authorities paid heed to Uncas's demands, because the Mohegans remained a vital part of the regional balance of power.

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<sup>255</sup> Uncas solicited the outspoken John Mason as his ally and "protector" of Mohegan interests within the Connecticut government. Roger Williams maintained a long-standing relationship as a respected and trusted negotiator for the Narragansetts. St. Jean, "Inventing Guardianship," 367; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 94-164.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 365; Charles Orr, ed., *History of the Pequot War: The Contemporary Accounts of Mason, Underhill, Vincent and Gardener. Reprinted from the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Cleveland: Helman-Taylor Co., 1897), 43.

<sup>257</sup> "July 1646," *Acts*, I, 74.

Yet, despite this apparent unequal distribution of power, the permanence of the Cassacinamon-Winthrop Jr. relationship suggests that this alliance was not simply political. On the one hand, the alliance between the younger Winthrop and the Pequot leader certainly fits within the understood Algonquian relationship between principal sachem and a tributary sachem. Yet, seventeenth-century Algonquians often solidified such relationships using notions of kinship.<sup>258</sup> What little can be gleaned from the available records suggests that the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance was one based on friendship as much as politics. Winthrop Jr. never abandoned Cassacinamon, despite repeated calls for him to do so by family members and political opponents. Cassacinamon, although he struck out on his own when necessary, never abandoned the Winthrop family even after conditions improved for the Pequots. The two men, and their communities, lived side-by-side for several years from the mid-1640s onward. Each man benefited greatly from their association with one another; for Cassacinamon, this relationship may have been interpreted as one between “fictive kin.”<sup>259</sup>

## II

In September 1638, two months after Cassacinamon’s journey to the Bay Colony, the Mohegans, Narragansetts, and Connecticut authorities met in Hartford to formalize their diplomatic relationship. In the months prior to the meeting, Governor Winthrop of

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<sup>258</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 43, 88, 162-163. Francis Jennings interprets such relationships as between a “lord” and a “vassal.” Jennings, *Invasion*, 105-127.

<sup>259</sup>“Deed of Webucksham and Washcomo to John Winthrop, Jr., January 1645,” *WP*, 5: 5; “John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 4, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 250; “Adam Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., March 14, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 319; For discussions of fictive kin and the phenomenon of “relatedness,” see the following works. David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1984); Janet Carsten, ed., *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sarah Franklin & Susan McKinnon, eds., *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

the Bay Colony drew up treaties with both the Narragansetts and the Mohegans, agreements that, on the surface, strengthened the Bay Colony's claims to Pequot territory. Not wishing to relinquish control to Massachusetts, Connecticut authorities sought similar agreements with the two major Algonquian powers to solidify its own claims to the territory and place itself at the head of Anglo-Algonquian relations in the region. They settled upon a "tripartite treaty" that more than anything else was geared toward bringing a sense of order to the Anglo-Indian frontier. The Hartford agreement declared that neither the Mohegans nor the Narragansetts were to "possess any part of the Pequots country without leave from the English." It also called for "a peace and familiarity" between Uncas and Miantonomi, whereby the two sachems pledged that "if there fall out injuries or wrongs...they shall not presently revenge it," but instead they would "appeale to the said English and they are to decide the same." The Mohegans and the Narragansetts were instructed not to give any shelter to enemies of the English, "nor their men, nor dogs, nor trapps, shall kill nor spoile or hurt any of [the] Englishmen's hogs, swine, or cattle." The treaty created a tributary relationship between the Native leaders and Connecticut that, in the words of historian Michael Oberg, was "akin to that between a superior and inferior sachem."<sup>260</sup>

However, both sachems continued to act as independent agents, with Uncas in particular knowing full well that Connecticut depended on him to secure the colony's borders. Uncas was not alone in this awareness. Governor William Bradford of Plymouth wrote that Connecticut's support of Uncas "did much increase his power and

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<sup>260</sup>“The Hartford Treaty with the Narragansetts and the Fenwick Letters,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 46 (1982): 355-366 (Hereafter *NEGHR*); Oberg, *Uncas*, 84-85; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 121-122.

augmente his Greatnes, which the Narigansets could not indure to see.”<sup>261</sup> The treaty exacerbated tensions between the Mohegans and the Narragansetts. The favoritism Connecticut displayed to Uncas shown through when it came to apportioning some Pequot prisoners. The treaty distributed some two hundred Pequots amongst the Mohegans, Narragansetts, and Niantics. The Narragansett and Niantic sachems, Miantonomi and Ninigret, received eighty Pequots and twenty Pequots, respectively. However, Uncas, in recognition of the staunch support he had provided the English, received one hundred Pequots. This huge boon to the Mohegans did not go unnoticed; the Narragansetts felt slighted at the disproportionate favoritism shown to the smaller Mohegan confederation.<sup>262</sup> The Pequots were not present at these negotiations.

Stripping the Pequots of all their former power, the Treaty of Hartford formally divided the Pequot survivors and their lands amongst the victors, as a way to prevent them from ever again threatening the security of Connecticut. The Mohegans and Narragansetts paid an annual tribute of wampum for the Pequots placed under their authority. They promised to behead those warriors “that had the chiefe hand in killing the English.” Connecticut authorities not only desired the removal of the Pequots as a political threat, they sought to destroy them as an identifiable community. The Pequots “were not to live in their ancient country, nor to be called by their ancient name, but to

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<sup>261</sup>Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 338; “Roger Williams to John Winthrop, July 21, 1640,” *RWC*, 1:203.

<sup>262</sup>John Mason, “A Brief History of the Pequot War: Especially of the Memorable Taking of their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637-Written by Major John Mason, a principal Actor therein, as then chief Captain and Commander of Connecticut Forces” (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1736), in Orr, *History of the Pequot War*, 1-46.

become Narragansetts and Mohegans.”<sup>263</sup> The same year the Treaty of Hartford denied the Pequots their ancient name, the colonial records still referred to them as Pequots and singled out one in particular, Robin Cassacinamon, as a Pequot leader. A clue to the untenable nature of this English declaration, it also demonstrated how little the English understood Algonquian social structures.

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During the eight years when Cassacinamon was absent from the written records, the Native political scene in southern New England grew more contentious and the ongoing rivalry between Uncas and Miantonomi intensified. The two sachems had never liked each other, but in the years after the Hartford Treaty their antagonism had exploded into an open rivalry of unabashed hatred. Miantonomi had grown increasingly disenchanted with the English, and he used the threat of his superior numbers and the possibility of an alliance with the Mohawks and other Native peoples to attempt to influence regional politics in his favor.<sup>264</sup> This made the English uneasy, and Uncas channeled that fear to his advantage. Uncas consistently outmaneuvered Miantonomi in the political arena; he strengthened his support in Connecticut and gained more consideration from Massachusetts Bay. In the process, Uncas absorbed more Pequot tributaries within his sphere of influence. Uncas not only solidified the position of the Mohegans, he alienated the Narragansetts and the Niantics; soon he became the target of

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<sup>263</sup>Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 338; De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, 160; *Rhode Island Historical Collection*, Vol. III, p. 177; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 121-122.

<sup>264</sup>Michael Leroy Oberg, “‘We Are All the Sachems from East to West’: A New Look at Miantonomi’s Campaign of Resistance,” *The New England Quarterly*, volume 77, no. 3 (September 2004): 478-499.



several assassination attempts. Uncas and the English believed these originated with Miantonomi. By the summer of 1643, the two sachems were at war with one another.<sup>265</sup>

In response to the ongoing hostility between Uncas and Miantonomi, and convinced they needed some kind of organization to exert their authority over the region, the New England colonies formed the Confederation of New England in 1643. Defined as “a firme and perpetuall league of friendship and amytye for offence and defence, mutual advice and succor upon all just occations both for preserving & propagating the truth and liberties of the Gospell and for their own mutuall safety and wellfare,” the confederation created an eight-seat adjudicating body, whose members were drawn equally from Connecticut, New Haven (founded in 1638), Massachusetts Bay, and Plymouth. The Commissioners of the United Colonies determined “how all the Juirsdiccons may carry it towards the Indians, that they neither grow insolent nor be injured without due sattisfaccon, lest war break in upon the Confederates through such miscarriages.”<sup>266</sup> This body handled subsequent relations with the Native peoples in New England. By creating this organization, the English colonies hoped to further their dominion over the Anglo-Algonquian frontier.

The Commissioners faced a difficult task as the war between Uncas and Miantonomi intensified. However, victory was at hand for the Mohegans; Uncas captured the Narragansett sachem late in the summer of 1643. The Mohegans turned Miantonomi over to English authorities at Hartford, per the Hartford Treaty of 1638, to wait for “advice from the English how to proceed against him for sundry treacherous

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<sup>265</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 92-107.

<sup>266</sup>*Acts*, 1:3-4, 6; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 119; Oberg, *Uncas*, 102.

attempts against his life.” At the first meeting of the Commissioners of the United Colonies in Boston, Miantonomi was brought before the committee in August 1643. The Commissioners ruled against Miantonomi, citing his “ambitious designes to make himself universal Sagamore or Governor of all these parts of the Countrey, of his treacherous plots by guifts to engage all the Indians at once to cut of the whole body of the English in these parts which were further confirmed by the Indians Generall preparations, messages, & sundry insolencies and outrages by them committed against the English and such Indians as were subject or friends to the English.” John Winthrop recorded that the Commissioners were “all of the opinion that it would not be safe to set him at liberty.” However, they also knew that “neither had we sufficient ground for us to put him to death.” The Commissioners devised a solution to their dilemma by ordering that Miantonomi be turned over to Uncas, so that he could “justly put such a false and bloodthirsty enemie to death.”<sup>267</sup>

The Commissioners justified their ruling by ingeniously arguing this was an internal dispute between the Mohegans and Narragansetts; therefore a Native leader, not English authorities, should put the Narragansett to death. Without question the Commissioners saw Uncas as a convenient tool to eliminate a sachem that caused too much trouble. Yet Uncas was no pawn. He had every reason to want Miantonomi out of the way, for the removal of his rival was just one more step in his rise to power. Miantonomi was turned over for execution, and Uncas was happy to oblige.

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<sup>267</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 472-473; *Acts*, 1: 10-12; Oberg, *Uncas*, 105.

Accompanied by several Mohegan warriors and two English observers, Uncas ordered his brother Wawequa to club Miantonomi to death in late August of 1643.<sup>268</sup>

The heightened tensions and shifting alliances generated by these events created an opportunity that Cassacinamon and the Pequots soon exploited. English authorities required Native support to maintain peace along the Anglo-Native frontier. However, the “unreliability” of allies such as Uncas — individuals who were still powerful enough to independently pursue their own objectives — frustrated English authorities who wanted the benefits provided by those allies, but none of the hassles. This period of heightened tensions framed the efforts of Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and John Winthrop Jr.

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In May of 1644, John Winthrop, Jr. journeyed to a coastal area near the mouth of the Pequot (Thames) River, an area claimed by Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay, to begin another English plantation. The younger Winthrop intended this plantation to be a shining example to other settlements in the region, a haven of economic and intellectual developments.<sup>269</sup> Although his previous tenure as governor at Saybrook had been unsuccessful, the younger Winthrop once again committed himself to Connecticut. Known subsequently as Pequot Plantation, Nameag, and later New London, the plantation was formally established in 1646 by Winthrop Jr. and Reverend Thomas Peters. The plantation held strategic advantages for the colonists who settled there. It lay

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<sup>268</sup>De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut* (Hartford: 1851), 198; Oberg, *Uncas*, 107; Herbert Milton Sylvester, *Indian Wars of New England: Topography of Indian Tribes. the Early Settler and the Indian. the Pequod War. Wars of the Mohegans*, 3 volumes (Boston: W. B. Clarke Company, 1910) 1: 412-413; Trumbull, *Connecticut*, 1: 106; Oberg, “Miantonomi’s Campaign,” 494-499.

<sup>269</sup>“Order of the Massachusetts General Court on the Petition of John Winthrop, Jr., April 1644,” *WP*, 4: 466; Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 84-86. Woodward interprets Winthrop Jr.’s motives from the standpoint of his alchemical background.

down river from Winthrop Jr.'s lead mines, and he envisioned the plantation as the ideal base from which to launch the economic development of the region. The site had access to abundant natural resources and was located along a deep water port that ensured easy trade and communication with other settlements.<sup>270</sup>

The younger Winthrop built his plantation in the midst of the jurisdictional battle between Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay. While Winthrop Jr. professed a desire to be a stabilizing force in the region, and publicly declared his indifference as to whether or not his settlement fell under the banner of Connecticut or Massachusetts, some in Connecticut remained unconvinced. He had received his charter from Massachusetts Bay, and some in the Connecticut government saw this as an attempt by the Bay Colony to annex the disputed area. To ease these tensions, Winthrop joined forces with Reverend Peters, a prominent man from Saybrook with extensive ties in Connecticut.<sup>271</sup> The dispute between Connecticut and Massachusetts continued until July 1647, when the Commissioners of the United Colonies “concluded that the Jurisdiction of that plantation doth & ought to belong to Connecticut.”<sup>272</sup> However, Winthrop did not have to worry about losing control of his plantation. The Commissioners declared that “a Commission be directed to Mr. Wynthrop to execute justice [in Connecticut] according to our laws & the rule of righteousness,” allowing Winthrop to continue in the Connecticut colony.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup>McBride, “Legacy,” 80; “Order of the Massachusetts General Court on the Petition of John Winthrop, Jr., April 1644,” *WP*, 4: 466; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 84-84, 102.

<sup>271</sup>“Petition of Jon Winthrop, Jr. to the Massachusetts General Court, June 1644,” *WP*, 4: 465-466; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 101-102; Jennings, *Invasion*, 197-201.

<sup>272</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts of the Commissioners*, I: 96-97; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 97-102.

<sup>273</sup>“September 9, 1647,” *CR*, I:157.

Aside from these practical considerations, political motivations directed the placement of Pequot Plantation. The Pequot village of Nameag lay adjacent to the younger Winthrop's alchemical haven. Nameag, in the Pequot-Mohegan language, meant "the fishing place," a linguistic expression of the settlement's desirability. The Nameag community fell under Uncas's jurisdiction and paid him tribute. Most important of all, Nameag was Cassacinamon's village and center of power. Cassacinamon aided Winthrop in the establishment of his plantation, and orchestrated the deal with Winthrop Jr. to build the settlement near his village. And in another agreement Winthrop Jr. arranged with other Indian groups in 1645, Winthrop Jr. identified Cassacinamon as "Governour and Chief Councelor among the Pequots."<sup>274</sup>

Winthrop used the plantation and Cassacinamon to further his own position as a cultural broker between the English and the Indians in Connecticut. For John Winthrop Jr., Cassacinamon and the Pequots solidified his reputation as a player in Anglo-Algonquian politics. He wrote that "it was of great concernment to have [Pequot Plantation] planted, to be a curb to the [Mohegan] Indians."<sup>275</sup> While Uncas still proved useful to colonial officials, they viewed him and his English partner John Mason as great sources of frustration as well. The Commissioners of the United Colonies felt that the "highly partial alliance" between Uncas and Mason proved "harmful to the [Connecticut] colony's relations with other neighboring Indian nations."<sup>276</sup> Mason argued that Uncas was the only ally Connecticut could trust, and promoted the Mohegans above all other

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<sup>274</sup>Ibid.; *WP*, 5: 4-5; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 132.

<sup>275</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 2: 274.

<sup>276</sup>St. Jean, "Inventing Guardianship," 370.

Natives. Yet, Connecticut officials found Uncas difficult to control, since Uncas lived outside of the colonial political structure. This tension appears in a letter that Winthrop received from his brother-in-law, Samuel Symonds. “I could wish that Uncas may be kept a friend still to the English,” Symonds wrote, “yet soe that he be not suffered to insulte or wronge other Indians.”<sup>277</sup> Nameag-Pequot Plantation served as the perfect setting from which John Winthrop Jr. and Cassacinamon could counter the Uncas-Mason alliance.

Cassacinamon also benefited from his ties to the younger Winthrop. The Cassacinamon-Winthrop Jr. alliance fell squarely into Algonquian political arrangements.<sup>278</sup> Local sachems in Algonquian confederations could increase their community’s autonomy by breaking old alliances and forming new ones with more advantageous political arrangements. Cassacinamon had to forge an alliance with someone in a position of power far greater than his own, in order for his own objectives to succeed.<sup>279</sup> One could argue that John Winthrop Jr. used Cassacinamon as a pawn, but this seems not to be the case. It is doubtful that John Winthrop Jr. persuaded the first Pequot he met, who happened to be Cassacinamon, to aid him in an attempt to keep the Mohegans in check. For such a plan to succeed Winthrop required a Pequot with the proper credentials for leadership and strong ties within the Pequot community; he needed a willing partner, not a pawn. Winthrop could not have convinced the Pequots to follow

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<sup>277</sup>*Massachusetts Historical Society’s Collections*, “Symond’s Letter, 1645,” Series 4, vol. VII, 122 (Hereafter *MHSC*).

<sup>278</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 87-88, 97-99, 103-105; “July 1646,” *Acts*, I; 74. Although the Cassacinamon-Winthrop relationship fit into standard Algonquian political frameworks, it did not appear that way to other colonial observers. Cassacinamon was sometimes referred to as “Robin, Mr. Winthrops Indyan,” a title that reinforced the concept of an imbalanced relationship.

<sup>279</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 88.

any of his plans without Cassacinamon's help, and Cassacinamon would not have offered his help if he did not receive something substantial from the partnership.

The first wave of colonists moved to Nameag in 1646, and those settlers spent their first winter living in Indian wigwams. The Nameag Pequots — about eighty men and their families — offered their services to the colonists as hunters and laborers.<sup>280</sup> Cassacinamon and the Pequots offered their labor and provided the plantation with a sense of security. “I look at the quiet of our plantation principally,” Winthrop wrote, “and conceive a greate security to have a party of the Indians [Nameag Pequots] here, to have their chiefe dependance upon the English. They will easily discover Indian plotts.”<sup>281</sup> Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots functioned as the perfect liaison between the colonists at Nameag and the Mohegans. In turn, Cassacinamon's attachment to Winthrop Jr. and Pequot Plantation served as the Pequots' first significant sign of defiance against Uncas in the post-war period.<sup>282</sup>

As long as the Nameag Pequots paid their tribute and kept their official allegiance to him, Uncas remained secure in their relationship with him.<sup>283</sup> The politically astute Uncas probably saw the same opportunity Winthrop Jr. did; if Cassacinamon's group

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<sup>280</sup>The Pawcatuck Pequot group, led by the Pequot-Niantic Wequash and affiliated with the Narragansetts, initially contained some 120 males. If their wives and children were counted, the total community may have numbered several hundred individuals. Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 6: 60-69, 84-89; “List of the Pequot Indians at Pequot Plantation about the Time of the Settlement 1646,” Eva Butler MSS, Indians and Colonial Research Center, Mystic, CT (Hereafter *ICRC*); Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (1979), 340-341; Kevin A. McBride, “The Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots, 1637-1900: A Preliminary Analysis” in *The Pequots of Southern New England*, 105.

<sup>281</sup>Winthrop, *Journal*, 2: 520.

<sup>282</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 103-105, 132-133.

<sup>283</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts*, I: 102.

channeled information to the English, they could be used to gather information about the colonists.<sup>284</sup> Uncas also found a use for John Winthrop Jr. himself when, in the spring of 1645, the younger Winthrop provided medical aid to the Mohegans after a battle with the Narragansetts.<sup>285</sup> However, Uncas objected when the indigenous residents of Nameag increased their numbers. Almost immediately after signing the agreement with Winthrop Jr., the number of Pequots living at Nameag increased. Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequot settlement drew other Pequots from within the Mohegan confederation to them, due to Cassacinamon's persuasive abilities as leader and his alliance with the powerful Englishman.<sup>286</sup> As more Pequots settled at the village, and as Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. strengthened the ties between the Nameag Pequots and the English plantation, Uncas perceived these actions as a threat to his authority.

During the summer of 1646, Thomas Peters asked Cassacinamon to conduct a hunt for the colonists. Such hunts were not unusual, and Cassacinamon took twenty Pequot men from Nameag and headed out. The Nameag men were accompanied by several Pequots from Wequashcook's Pawcatuck band of Pequots.<sup>287</sup> Initially, this excursion was no different than other hunts Cassacinamon had organized for the colonists. However, on this particular hunt, Cassacinamon led the party to "the East side of [the] Pequat [River]." The land east of the Pequot (Thames) River was former Pequot territory that Uncas had claimed through one of his marriages to a Pequot noblewoman.

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<sup>284</sup>Williams to John Winthrop, 23 July 1638," *RCW*, I: 68.

<sup>285</sup>Thomas Peters to John Winthrop, Jr., May 1645," *WP*, 5: 20-21; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 111.

<sup>286</sup>McBride, "Legacy," 83.

<sup>287</sup>Wequashcook was the son of the Pequot-Niantic leader Wequash, who had aided the English during the Pequot War. The Pawcatuck Pequot band paid tribute to Ninigret, sachem of the Niantics and with kinship ties to the Narragansetts.



Since Uncas had not granted Cassacinamon permission to hunt in that area, he was furious. The unauthorized hunt was symptomatic of Cassacinamon's increasingly obstructive behavior, which now included refusing to pay Uncas tribute.<sup>288</sup>

Such insubordination could not go unpunished. Uncas amassed a force of three hundred warriors and ambushed the Pequot hunting party. When the Mohegans attacked Cassacinamon's men, the Pequots ran. Uncas's forces chased the Pequots "with great clamor and fierceness back to the Plantation," beating and wounding those who were too slow to avoid them all the way back to Nameag. The Pequots and English settlers could only watch as Uncas and his warriors entered "and divided themselves into squadrons." Hoping to avoid detection, some of Cassacinamon's men hid in their homes. Uncas, always a master of political theater, made this a true spectacle. Uncas stared down the Pequots and the English, and then he gave an order in Mohegan. With that command, the Mohegans tore into the wigwams, and dragged the Pequots who had been hiding out into public view. They then ransacked the settlement for anything of value, "taking there wompum, there skins [and] there baskets," and destroyed their wigwams. The Mohegans then publicly humiliated the Pequots, "cutinge And sloshinge and beatinge" the men "in a sore maner which was A sad sighte to the beholders." After beating them and cutting their hair, Uncas ordered them stripped, "tearing there breaches there hose from there legs there showes from there feete." The beaten and naked Pequots were then forced into the water, as Uncas's warriors shot at them for sport.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts*, I: 99; McBride, “Legacy,” 84.

<sup>289</sup>“Petition of the Inhabitants of New London to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, and Memorandum by John Winthrop Jr. to the New London planters, September 1646,” *WP*, 5:111-112; Oberg, *Uncas*, 117-118; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 133-134, 202; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing off in Early America*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000, 56.

The English settlers were not spared Uncas's ire either. While none of the colonists were physically hurt, the Mohegans pointed their guns at them, drove away their livestock "almost to Monhegan," and ransacked their dwellings "friteinge the women And children." They then helped themselves to the English supplies, taking their corn and "A great deal of mr. winterops wompum pege carrying away a hat and coat of mr. Peters also a coat and severall skins of other mens."<sup>290</sup> Uncas then stared down the frightened denizens of Nameag, Pequot and English alike, and "used some blasphemous speeches." He then did something he rarely did – he spoke in English, ensuring that everyone present knew just how serious he was. "I am the victor" he said. With that, the Mohegans took their loot and departed, leaving the Nameag Pequots and English to pick up the pieces.<sup>291</sup>

No one was killed, for Uncas intended the raid to be a display of dominance, not death. Uncas wanted to prove to everyone at Nameag, but especially Cassacinamon and John Winthrop Jr., he was in charge. The Nameag Pequots were *his* tributaries, Cassacinamon was *his* subordinate, and Winthrop Jr. and the English were only living at their plantation due to *his* benevolence. However, Uncas's attempt at coercive intimidation backfired. Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr., while shaken by the raid, refused to be cowed.<sup>292</sup> Instead, they used the raid as the excuse they needed to publicly defy Uncas's authority, and justify freeing Cassacinamon's community from Uncas's

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<sup>290</sup>Petition of the Inhabitants of New London to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, and Memorandum by John Winthrop Jr. to the New London planters, September 1646," *WP*, 5:111-112; Oberg, *Uncas*, 117-118.

<sup>291</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 196, 202. According to Eric Spencer Johnson, coercion such as demonstrated during the Nameag raids, was one of the political strategies used by seventeenth-century Algonquians.

control.<sup>293</sup> The Nameag raid was exactly the kind of aggressive response Cassacinamon hoped for, since it allowed Cassacinamon and Winthrop to take the issue to the Commissioners of the United Colonies for arbitration. Colonial authorities had reserved the right to arbitrate disputes between Native communities since the end of the Pequot War in 1637.<sup>294</sup> An audience with the Commissioners gave Cassacinamon the opportunity to describe how unjustly Uncas treated the Pequots in his confederation. Strengthened by John Winthrop Jr.'s support, Cassacinamon stood a fair chance of persuading the Commissioners to take action.

Initially, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. called upon Winthrop Jr.'s father in Massachusetts Bay for help. Pequot Plantation may have been within Connecticut's jurisdiction, but the elder Winthrop's authority still carried weight. Governor Winthrop sent a message to Uncas from Boston, and reminded him "of what the English have done for your safety against the Narragansetts," and that Uncas had "invited our people to come and sitt downe by you." The senior Winthrop was disappointed to hear that "you [Uncas] do continually molest them, putting their women in feare, and the Indians Cutshamaskin Robin [Cassacinamon] and others who are helpful to them." Winthrop then warned Uncas that if he continued this unjustified behavior, "we shall leave you and your brother to shifte for yourselves and then (we knowe) the Naragansetts wilbe well pleased, and doe what we will require of them." However, if Uncas and the Mohegans carried themselves well "towards those of our new plantation and the Indians there," Winthrop assured Uncas that "we shall remaine your friends." The letter was sent, and

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<sup>293</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 118-119.

<sup>294</sup>"September 1645," *Acts*, I: 51.

the interpreter Thomas Stanton translated it “into Indian that it may be read to him [Uncas] by any Englishman and yet hee understand it.”<sup>295</sup>

Given the ongoing disputes between the English and Narragansetts, and the Narragansetts’ hatred for Uncas, Winthrop’s threat was not an idle one. While he did not believe the English would side militarily with the Narragansetts, the loss of a powerful diplomatic ally would have weakened Uncas. However, the elder Winthrop’s stern words of warning were insufficient for John Winthrop Jr. When he received his copy of the letter to Uncas, the younger Winthrop made an addition to the letter when he endorsed it. Winthrop Jr. ordered that Uncas was “to be required and straightly charged not to come or send into the said plantation in any such manner, or any way to disturbe the same, or any way to trouble or offend the said Indians [Nameag Pequots].” This was, according to Winthrop Jr., “an order that should have beene sent.”<sup>296</sup>

When the Commissioners of the United Colonies met in New Haven on September 14, 1646, Uncas joined them and stated his case.<sup>297</sup> Uncas seized the chance to reaffirm his ties with the English. Ever the politician, he first “acknowledged some miscarriages in vindicatinge his own right soe neare the English plantations.” However, while he admitted that his actions at Nameag went too far, he asserted that he had been driven to such a forceful display due to “severall wrongs he had received” at the hands of Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. Uncas argued that the Nameag Pequots, who were by law his rightful tributaries, “were drawne from him under colloure of submitting to the

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<sup>295</sup>“John Winthrop to Uncas, 20 June 1646,” *WP*, 5: 82; “Thomas Peters to John Winthrop Jr., 29 June 1646,” *WP*, 5: 85.

<sup>296</sup>“John Winthrop to Uncas, 20 June 1646,” *WP*, 5: 83; Oberg, *Uncas*, 119.

<sup>297</sup>“September 14, 1646,” *Acts*, I: 72.

English plantation at Pequat.” He then reminded the Commissioners that this unpleasantness started when the Pequots “under some countenance and encouragment given by the said English, hunted within his proper limit without his leave.”<sup>298</sup> For Uncas, the real troublemakers were Cassacinamon and John Winthrop Jr., and their various schemes to take the Nameag Pequots away from him. The Commissioners reassured Uncas that if he continued to follow the guidelines of the Hartford Treaty, the Commissioners and the Connecticut government would not “take any of them [Pequots] from him [Uncas], nor allow that they be withdrawne by any of the English plantations, till they have some further just grounds.”<sup>299</sup> With that said, the Commissioners and Uncas waited for the Nameag delegation to arrive for official deliberation to begin.

The Commissioner’s invocation of “just grounds” was crucial to Cassacinamon’s entire effort. If Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. convinced the Commissioners that Uncas frequently mistreated the Pequots, then the Commissioners could remove the Pequots from Uncas. This action would benefit not only Cassacinamon’s community, but the English colonists at Nameag. In a letter he sent to Thomas Peters before the Commissioners were to convene, Winthrop Jr. argued that “if these Indians [Nameag Pequots] that we must live neere be still under Uncas command, there wilbe noe living for English there.” Uncas would continue to cause trouble for Cassacinamon and the English, and Winthrop Jr. warned that “we must not expect to be quiet.”<sup>300</sup> However, if Cassacinamon’s Pequots were freed from Uncas and could formally ally with the

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<sup>298</sup>“September 14, 1646,” *Acts*, I: 72.

<sup>299</sup>“Sept. 14, 1646,” *Acts*, I: 75.

<sup>300</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr. to Thomas Peters,” *WP*, 5: 100-101.

English, the colonists would continue to reap the benefits of having a group of friendly Natives associated with them. “I looke at the quiet of our plantation principally,” Winthrop Jr. wrote, “and conceive a greater security to have a party of the Indians there, to have their cheife dependence upon the English.” Cassacinamon and the Pequots functioned as a dependable buffer, a bulwark against the wilderness that the Puritans feared, a wilderness that still contained the ever-present danger of Indian attacks. It made sense to have dependable Native allies who crossed both worlds – Native and English – and who would, in Winthrop Jr.’s view, “easily discover any Indian plotts.” Winthrop Jr. encouraged Peters to “meet the Indians the captaine Casacinamon and some others in the name of the rest,” so that they “may declare their desires by way of petition.” William Morton, a colonist living at Pequot Plantation, drafted the complaint sent to the Commissioners against Uncas in 1646.<sup>301</sup>

Even though Winthrop Jr. wanted the Pequots living near his plantation “to have their cheife dependence upon the English,” the question remains as to why the Nameag Pequots chose Connecticut authority as being preferable to living under Uncas. Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots surely remembered that the Mohegans sided with the English in their destruction of the Mystic Fort in 1637. It is not surprising that many Pequots had hard feelings, if not outright contempt, for Uncas because of the part he played in their defeat. However, despite these possible negative feelings towards Uncas and other Native leaders, some Pequots did not join the community at Nameag, or Wequashcook’s Pequot community affiliated with the Niantics. The Pequots who remained with the Mohegans had most likely developed family ties with those

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<sup>301</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr. to Thomas Peters,” *WP*, 5: 100-101; “Petition of the Inhabitants of New London to the Commissioners of the United Colonies,” *WP*, 5: 111-112.

communities, and thus did not want to leave.<sup>302</sup> The Pequots who went to Nameag likely did not have such strong ties with their adoptive communities. Moving to Nameag provided them with the chance to reestablish their own separate Pequot community without fear of reprisal or attack, whereas earlier attempts to do so proved unsuccessful.<sup>303</sup> At Nameag, Cassacinamon offered Pequots the chance to live openly as Pequots, under a leader who himself was Pequot, and who had powerful connections that could protect them from outside interference.<sup>304</sup> In short, Cassacinamon acted as a sachem.

William Morton and three Nameag Pequots, including Cassacinamon's brother and a Pequot shaman named Wampushtet, arrived in New Haven on September 16 to argue their case before the Commissioners. It did not go well. Neither Cassacinamon nor Winthrop Jr. attended the meeting. Cassacinamon's exact whereabouts are unclear, although he likely remained at Nameag. Winthrop Jr. was in Boston attending to family matters, but he also informed his friend Thomas Peters that "I am not willing to deale in it because it may be conceived my intentions are other then they are."<sup>305</sup> It appeared that Winthrop Jr.'s favoritism towards Cassacinamon was so obvious he feared that the Commissioners would not believe the abuses the Pequots suffered were genuine.

The absence of the Pequots' two most vociferous advocates was a blow to the Nameag delegation, but what came next was a public relations disaster. Despite the complaints listed by the Pequots and Morton, the Commissioners were not convinced,

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<sup>302</sup>Fickes, "They Could Not Endure That Yoke," 76.

<sup>303</sup>*CR*, 1:32.

<sup>304</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 87-88, 97-105, 123.

<sup>305</sup>John Winthrop Jr. to Thomas Peters," *WP*, 5: 101.

and they “fownde noe cause to alter the former writing given” Uncas.<sup>306</sup> When it looked like the Commissioners were leaning against them, Morton implicated Uncas in yet another assault. According to Morton, Uncas paid fifteen fathoms of wampum to Wampushet to use “a hatchet a wounde another Indian” and lay the blame on Wequashcook.<sup>307</sup> Uncas may have targeted Wequashcook to eliminate a potential rival, and since Wequashcook was a tributary of Ninigret’s, this would have negatively impacted the Niantic leader as well. Wequashcook led a Pequot community outside of Uncas’s confederation; such a plot to discredit him may have drawn Pequots away from Wequashcook and Ninigret and towards Uncas. While Cassacinamon antagonized Uncas, the Nameag group was already within the Mohegan confederation and Cassacinamon may have been closely tied to Uncas via the bride Cassacinamon secured. Thus, Uncas used different coercive tactics were used to keep them in line.

Wampushet completed the hit and took the wampum, but soon became “troubled in conscience.” Morton testified that Wampushet “could have no rest till he had discovered Uncas to be the author” of the plot. The Commissioners were interested in Morton’s charge, but as they pressed further in their questions they found the Pequot’s story wanting. When they asked Morton what other witnesses he had to corroborate Wampushet’s story, he admitted “that an Indian woeman had spoken as much, but whiter she had heard it from Uncas, or only from the Pequatt Powwow [Wampushet] he could not say.” The Commissioners then inquired as “to whome the Pequat powowe had first charged Uncas as guilty in the plot,” and he admitted that “it was to Robin

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<sup>306</sup>“September 16, 1646,” *Acts*, I: 73.

<sup>307</sup>*Ibid.*, I: 74; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries, 108; Oberg, *Uncas*, 120.



[Cassacinamon] an Indian who had served Mr. Winthrop.” If true, this attested to Cassacinamon’s use of information and misinformation to foment dissent. While he could not openly challenge Uncas with force, Cassacinamon could manipulate the more subtle aspects of politics to his advantage.<sup>308</sup>

Suspicious of this connection to Cassacinamon, whose rivalry with Uncas was well-known by this point, the Commissioners questioned Wampusht directly through the interpreter Thomas Stanton, and it is here where Cassacinamon’s absence was the most damaging to the Nameag delegation. Wampusht told his story; however, it was not the story the Nameag delegates expected. To everyone’s surprise, except perhaps for Uncas, Wampusht refuted Morton’s claims: he “cleared Uncas & cast the plot & guilt upon [Wequash] Cooke, & Robin Mr. Winthrops Indyan.”<sup>309</sup> The Pequots and Morton were furious, and the Commissioners demanded to know if this were true. At some point after the assault, Cassacinamon discovered Wampusht was the assailant. Instead of turning him over to Wequashcook, Cassacinamon offered him a deal. Wampusht explained that “Robin had given him a payre of breeches, & promised him 25 fathome of wampam to cast the plot upon Uncas.” Worse yet, Wampusht claimed that “the English Plantation & Pequat knew” that the charges against Uncas were false, and perjured themselves before the Commissioners. Enraged by Wampusht’s about face testimony, Cassacinamon’s brother and the other Pequot man pleaded with the Commissioners that “Uncas hired him [Wampusht] to withdrawe & alter his charge.” Morton, himself angered by this reversal, questioned Wampusht himself. Wampusht, with Uncas

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<sup>308</sup>Ibid.

<sup>309</sup>Ibid.

watching him the entire time, did not change his testimony, and the Nameag Pequots' claim collapsed. The Commissioners could not determine who hired Wampusket - Cassacinamon or Uncas. Unsure of who to believe, the Commissioners dismissed Morton and the Pequots, and sent them away empty-handed. They also rebuked Uncas, and advised him that "if he expected any favoure & respect from the English to have no hand in any such designs or any other unjust ways."<sup>310</sup> The central conflict between Cassacinamon and Uncas remained unresolved.

Unwilling to allow the situation to deteriorate further, in February 1647 the Commissioners drafted a resolution that they hoped would vitiate the dispute between Cassacinamon and Uncas.<sup>311</sup> The agreement of February 1647 attempted to create specific guidelines for the Commissioners that explained the tributary relationship between the Mohegans and Nameag Pequots. The agreement was signed by both Cassacinamon and Uncas and witnessed by their English allies/guardians Winthrop Jr. and John Mason. It stipulated that the Nameag Pequots would pay "soe much wampum per head unto Uncos as is sett downe by the English in Covenants betwixt them and the saide Uncos with others for one yeare and as formerly they have beene accustomed to doe." However, Cassacinamon's community was allowed to pay one third of their tribute in "Indian Tradeing cloth one yard and halfe at sixteen vix: shillings." The agreement also required that Cassacinamon and the Pequots "shall not offer wrong in word or deed to Uncos or his; but be ready to attend him in such services of peace or warre as they shall bee directed to by the Governor of Connecticott until the meeting of the

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<sup>310</sup>"September 16, 1646," *Acts*, I: 72-73.

<sup>311</sup>"Agreement between Uncas and Cassasinamon," 24 February 1647, *WP*, 5: 131.

Commissioners.”<sup>312</sup> For their part, Cassacinamon’s people were allowed to “plant this present yeare in such place as Mr. John Winthrop shall appoint them.” If Cassacinamon complied with the agreement, the Nameag Pequots would live “without disturbance of Uncos or any of his” and be allowed to “improve their labour and enjoy their possessions and not receive interruption from Uncos other than that is before expressed.” Cassacinamon was also allowed to keep the “Niantique Indians that are now at Nameag” as full members of the community, as Uncas and the Mohegans promised not to “hinder them or disturb them from fetching their corne and matts and other goods.”<sup>313</sup>

The February agreement reaffirmed the Pequots’ tributary status, and in that respect, it was a victory for Uncas. Uncas had intimidated English settlers so that he could reassert his dominance over his Native tributaries. He had gotten away with little more than a gentle rebuke from the Commissioners of the United Colonies, a clear indication of his continued importance to the regional power structure.<sup>314</sup> John Winthrop advised his son to make peace with Uncas for the good of the colony, “seeing he is your neighbor, I would wish you would not be averse to Reconciliation with him, if they of Connectecott desire it.”<sup>315</sup> However, by inserting themselves into the dispute between Uncas and the Nameag Pequots, and by trying to regulate the Native tributary relationship, English colonial authorities created an opening that Cassacinamon and Winthrop, Jr. could exploit.

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<sup>312</sup>Ibid.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid.

<sup>314</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 121.

<sup>315</sup>John Winthrop to John Winthrop Jr., 14 May 1647, *WP*, 5: 161.

While English authorities saw this as a way to exert control over the frontier, for Algonquians like Cassacinamon it affirmed that English officials could be used by Algonquian leaders as a tool to promote their own agendas.<sup>316</sup> While not a total victory, the agreement recognized that the Nameag Pequots were permitted to live near the English at Nameag, and ensured that Cassacinamon and his community retained access to English support. The agreement further acknowledged Cassacinamon's leadership when it recognized additional Natives that lived at Nameag. These Algonquians had not originally been under Uncas's jurisdiction, but had moved the village to be with family and kin under Cassacinamon. These transplants only added to the size of the community. Those "Niantique Indians" were likely Pequots who had previously been Niantic tributaries, and attests to Cassacinamon's continued ability to draw Pequots from all over the region to Nameag. Roger Williams' assessment of "the Pequot Robin" was proving to be correct.<sup>317</sup> Uncas was instructed to leave the Nameag Pequots alone in domestic matters; their only contact with him was limited to paying tribute and accompanying him on matters of peace and war. If it could be proven that Uncas violated this arrangement, the Commissioners might acquiesce to Winthrop Jr.'s and Cassacinamon's requests.

The compromise agreement only spurred Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. forward. Winthrop Jr. argued that his settlement could not prosper if the Nameag Pequots remained under subjugation to Uncas.<sup>318</sup> He complained again about the injustice of "the late inrode by Uncas and his crue upon the Indians of this place in

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<sup>316</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 99, 103-105.

<sup>317</sup>"Williams to John Winthrop, 23 July 1638," *RWC*, I: 168.

<sup>318</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 121.

robbing all their wigwams and depriving them of their necessaries for their very life.” Uncas’s attempts to dominate the Nameag Pequots adversely affected the English settlers, who found themselves caught in the crosshairs, and who had been “most barbarously injuriously and unchristianly dealt withal” by the Mohegans.<sup>319</sup> When the Commissioners met again in July 1647, Cassacinamon issued a formal petition on behalf of the Nameag community and officially asked that the Pequots be released from Mohegan jurisdiction and placed under English authority.<sup>320</sup>

In the petition of 1647, Cassacinamon and his co-petitioner Obechiquod engaged in a game of pure diplomacy. Cassacinamon crafted the petition to exploit English attitudes concerning the Pequots. He acknowledged that the Pequots “have done very ill against the English formerly,” and that “they have justly suffered & beene rightfully conquered by the English.” After showing fealty to the English, Cassacinamon made clear that his community “had no consent nor hand in shedding the English blood.”<sup>321</sup> Given the nature of the Pequot War, it is unlikely that no one at Nameag had fought in the war. However, Cassacinamon knew that the English would never side with him if they believed he harbored warriors who had killed Englishmen. He then played upon English largesse, saying that Wequash, the Pequot-Niantic sachem who had sided with the English, had advised Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots to flee “from our Country” to escape the war. According to Cassacinamon, Wequash promised that “the

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<sup>319</sup>“Protest of the Inhabitants of New London Against Uncas,” ca. 1647, *WP*, I: 124; Oberg, *Uncas*, 121.

<sup>320</sup>“The Humble Petition of Cassinomon and Obechiquod in the name & behalfe of other Pequatts now dwelling at Nommiog, July 1647,” *Indian Papers*, ser. 1 (1647-1759), vol. 1, doc. No. 1, Connecticut State Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. (Hereafter *Indian Papers*), I:1.

<sup>321</sup>*Ibid.*

English should not hurt us if wee did not Joyne in warre against them.” Assured of English goodwill by Wequash, Cassacinamon and the Pequots hoped that they could count on that benevolence now, and requested the Commissioners “to take us [the Pequots] under the subjection of the English, and appointe us a place where we may live peaceably under the government of the English.”<sup>322</sup>

The petition made it clear that the Nameag Pequot community, not just their sachem Cassacinamon, wanted to be free of Mohegan control. A total of sixty-two Pequot men put their marks on the petition: forty-eight Nameag Pequots along with fourteen Pequot Niantic tributaries.<sup>323</sup> That some Niantic Pequots signed on to Cassacinamon’s petition is telling, since they technically were not under Mohegan jurisdiction. The Niantic tributaries living at Nameag received permission to settle there under the February 1647 agreement between Uncas and Cassacinamon.<sup>324</sup> Despite attempts to divide the Pequots, this was proof of just how connected the Pequot people remained. Cassacinamon not only drew Pequots to Nameag who, like himself, were under Uncas’s sphere of influence; he attracted individuals who lived in other territories into his community. That so many male heads of household signed Cassacinamon’s petition indicates that the Nameag community was in agreement: English authority was preferable to Mohegan authority.

The 1647 petition was Cassacinamon’s first overt attempt to remove the Pequots from Uncas’s authority. All of Cassacinamon’s previous actions, allying with Winthrop

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<sup>322</sup>Ibid.

<sup>323</sup>Ibid.

<sup>324</sup>“Agreement between Uncas and Cassacinamon,” 24 February 1647, *WP*, 5: 131.

Jr., drawing Pequots to his community, and hunting in Uncas's territory without obtaining Uncas's permission, were tactics used to goad Uncas into a confrontation. Even the first complaint leveled against Uncas in 1646 was presented as a reaction to Uncas's abuse of power. The petition was a bold step for Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots just ten years after the Pequot War.<sup>325</sup> Cassacinamon's denial that any of his people fought in the war testified to the fear that many colonists had regarding the Pequots.<sup>326</sup> The petition of 1647 was a direct assault on Uncas's authority, with Cassacinamon taking his fight to the next level.

Winthrop presented the petition on Cassacinamon's behalf to the Commissioners at their meeting in Boston. Uncas did not attend the meeting, but instead sent his trusted diplomat Foxon to defend him.<sup>327</sup> Cassacinamon's petition listed the "unjustice & tyranny" the Pequots suffered under Uncas's authority. The Pequots claimed Uncas had extorted wampum payments from them that were intended for the English, saying "that they have sent wampum by him to the English 25 times, but know not whither all, or any part of it was rightly delivered."<sup>328</sup> The Pequots also complained that Uncas had abused their women, with two of the petitioners – Obechiquod and Sanaps – serving as prime examples of this. Sanaps reported "that Uncus had abused his wife," and "that after she was soe defiled, she grew forward & he had little peace with her." Obechiquod claimed

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<sup>325</sup>“Williams to John Winthrop, 23 July 1638,” *RWC*, I: 168.

<sup>326</sup>*Indian Papers*, I:1.

<sup>327</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 121.

<sup>328</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts*, I: 98.

“that Uncas had taken away his wife, defileth her, & keepeth her away per force” when Obechiquod abandoned Uncas to settle with Cassacinamon’s Pequots at Nameag.<sup>329</sup>

The harassment escalated when John Winthrop Jr. planted his settlement near their community, as Uncas acted in increasingly irrational ways to exert his dominion over Nameag. When one of Uncas’s men was wounded in Long Island, he came to Nameag and demanded Cassacinamon and the Pequots join him in a retaliatory raid. Cassacinamon refused, saying that “he had engaged himself with some others to Mr. Winthrop...to build him a wigwam.” The rest of the Nameag warriors, “not knowinge any cause why Uncus should take so many men with him,” were not convinced of the necessity of having such an overwhelming military force for so simple a task, so they “excused themselves” from the raid. However, not wishing to violate their tributary obligations to Uncas, they promised him that “if any should shoote an arrowe against him upon notice they would come over & assist him.”<sup>330</sup> Uncas “threatened to be revenged.” He got his vengeance when he “cut all their [fishing] nets.” Uncas’s outrageous behavior continued until he attacked Nameag after Cassacinamon conducted the hunt for Thomas Peters, which caused John Winthrop Jr. to complain to the Commissioners in 1646.<sup>331</sup>

The charges sounded severe enough, and they present the picture of a Native community trying to honor its tributary relationship, but being unable to do so due to the unreasonable demands of the sachem. Cassacinamon probably exaggerated certain elements for greater dramatic effect, and he certainly downplayed his numerous attempts

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<sup>329</sup>Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>331</sup>Ibid., 99.



to provoke Uncas. However, most of the charges bore a ring of truth. Uncas had indeed “stolen” the Pequot women he married to gain their titles, and there is no mention of the women ever being consulted whether or not they wished to marry Uncas. As for the charges of extortion and revenge, Uncas had always been known to follow his own rules. If Uncas could get away something that benefited his own position, he did it. It is not unreasonable to believe Uncas kept wampum intended for colonial authorities, nor was he above using coercion to solidify his power over his Pequot tributaries.

In addition to the threats and extortion of wampum, the Pequots accused Uncas of favoring the Mohegans over the Pequots, a charge that struck at the heart of the identity issue. Uncas and other Native leaders incorporated Pequot survivors after the war, in the hopes of expanding their power and strengthening their populations. The Hartford Treaty had called for the Pequots to be fully absorbed into their new Native communities. Yet, according to Cassacinamon, Uncas refused to see them not as his own people, but as Pequots. He did not treat them with the level of respect or mutual reciprocity that sachems were expected to show the communities under their care.<sup>332</sup> Uncas therefore violated Algonquian social protocols as well as the terms of the Hartford Treaty.

This ill-treatment occurred at all levels between the Mohegans and Pequots, ranging from the most benign social situations to more serious political matters. When the Pequots beat the Mohegans at games, the Mohegans refused to pay them their winnings. When the Pequots petitioned Uncas for redress, they complained that Uncas “carries it p[ar]tially to the Mohegans & threatens the Pequots.”<sup>333</sup> Games of chance

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<sup>332</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 122.

fulfilled an important part in maintaining the reciprocal relationships between sachems and their communities. As anthropologist Eric Spencer Johnson notes, gambling was a way in which goods and wealth were redistributed within Algonquian communities. If the sachem sponsored these games, he upheld the cycle of tribute and mutual obligation.<sup>334</sup> By always siding with the Mohegans in these matters, Uncas neglected his responsibility as sachem and instead reinforced a tiered social system within his confederation, with the Pequots always subordinate to the Mohegans.

According to Cassacinamon, the situation remained unchanged until a personal tragedy struck Uncas. When one of Uncas's children died in the spring of 1647, he "commanded" the Pequots to give his wife a gift to help assuage her grief. The Pequots, "being affraid" of Uncas's wrath, presented the grieving couple one hundred fathoms of wampum. The gift "pleased Uncus," so much so that "he promised thence forward to esteeme them as Mohegans."<sup>335</sup> Cassacinamon hoped that a new understanding had been reached with Uncas, but it was short-lived. "A few days later," Uncas's brother Wawequa "came & tould them that Uncus & his Councell, had determined to kill some of them." The Pequots were "much amased" by this injustice. According to Cassacinamon, it was this final betrayal by Uncas that caused the Nameag Pequots to "with draw from Uncus, & to submit & subject themselves to the English" for protection. The Nameag Pequots collected a gift of wampum to present to the English as part of this proposal. When Uncas learned of this, he escalated the conflict with Cassacinamon, "and came

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<sup>333</sup>"July 1647," *Acts*, I: 98.

<sup>334</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 78.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 99.

with his men armed to the forte, called for those who promoted that businessse, threatening to kill them.” The Pequots who had proposed the arrangement with the English avoided a fight by sneaking out of the fort and filing a complaint with the Connecticut magistrates.<sup>336</sup>

Uncas’s frequent use of force and coercion enabled him to maintain control over his tributaries. However, with the 1647 petition, Cassacinamon charged that by refusing to acknowledge the rights of the Nameag Pequots and by neglecting the Algonquian system of mutual reciprocity, Uncas had violated the traditional power and responsibilities of a sachem.<sup>337</sup> For all of these reasons Cassacinamon felt the Pequots had no choice but to petition the Commissioners for redress. By placing themselves under English jurisdiction, Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots felt they stood a chance of maintaining their own Pequot autonomy, community, and identity. By seeking out a new ally for his people, one who engaged in this system of reciprocity, Cassacinamon was acting as a sachem.<sup>338</sup>

Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. presented the Commissioners with a compelling argument. Uncas found himself in a tenuous position with the Commissioners, who demanded an immediate explanation for why the situation at Nameag had deteriorated. Arguing on Uncas’s behalf, Foxon confessed that the Mohegans “were foolish & faulty in that rash assault which they made upon the Pequatts,” and expressed regret that his actions caused “the affrightenment of the women & children there.”<sup>339</sup> However, Uncas

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<sup>336</sup>Ibid.

<sup>337</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 122; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 71-78, 132-136, 202-209.

<sup>338</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 97-105.

<sup>339</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts*, I: 100.

believed that the principle behind the action was justified. Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots were Uncas's subjects who, by Native custom and English law, owed him their allegiance and tribute.<sup>340</sup> Uncas stressed that Cassacinamon and the Pequots had engaged in illegal activities by hunting in his territory without his permission, by refusing to aid him and pay him tribute, and by conspiring to join the English. Uncas was therefore "justly offended," and was within his right to stop such activities.<sup>341</sup> With these illegal activities Cassacinamon attempted, with Winthrop Jr.'s help, to generate dissent among the Pequots and impugn Uncas's reputation in the eyes of the Commissioners.<sup>342</sup> These actions could not go unrecognized or unpunished, otherwise Uncas would have appeared inept to his people, something a sachem could not let go unpunished.

Foxon had an answer to every Pequot accusation. He denied Obechiquod's claim that Uncas had stolen his wife, saying that she left Obechiquod of her own free will, for "amonge the Indians it is usuall when a wife soe desert her husband another may take her." Native women had "considerable freedom when it came to dissolving a union," so it is certainly within the realm of possibility that she had left her husband for Uncas.<sup>343</sup> Ultimately, Foxon argued "that the Pequatts being an under people might have some wrong from the Mohegans in play & durst not presse for their right, but denyeth that Uncas had any hand therein."<sup>344</sup> Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots only complained because they were a subject people, not because of excessively harsh

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<sup>340</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 122.

<sup>341</sup>"July 1647," *Acts*, I: 100.

<sup>342</sup>"July 1647," *Acts*, I: 100.

<sup>343</sup>"July 1647," *Acts*, I: 98; Oberg, *Uncas*, 122.

<sup>344</sup>"July 1647," *Acts*, I: 99.

treatment at the hands of Uncas. According to Foxon, this petition was just another example of Cassacinamon causing trouble for Uncas and the Commissioners.

In the end, power politics won the argument. The Commissioners immediately dismissed Cassacinamon's attempts at flattering English authorities with his story about Wequash.<sup>345</sup> The Commissioners once again issued Uncas a reprimand, saying "that Uncas be duly reproved for any passage of tirannicall government over them [Cassacinamon's group], soe far as they may be proved." They then ordered Uncas to return Obechiquod's wife to him, and warned Uncas that he must learn to control his brother Wawequa. If he did not, the English would "wholly disert & leave him, that the Narragansett & others may require & recover satisfaction."<sup>346</sup>

Despite the reprimand, the Commissioners ruled that they were "not so far satisfied in those Pequat complaints, as to justify their disorderly withdrawing [from Uncas]." The Commissioners not only refused to find in favor of Cassacinamon, but they reaffirmed the Treaty of Hartford. The Commissioners, "remembering the proud wars some years since made by the Pequatts," stated that most colonists and administrators still harbored negative feelings towards the Pequots. Uncas and his assistant Foxon, played upon those feelings in their answer to the Commissioners. In doing so, Uncas swayed the Commissioners to rule in his favor, claiming "that some of the petitioners were in Misticke fort in fight against the English."<sup>347</sup> Uncas's direct appeal to the Commissioners' fears, combined with the fact he knew the colonial authorities still

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<sup>345</sup> "July 1647," *Acts*, I: 97.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 102; Oberg, *Uncas*, 123; Johnson, "Uncas and the Politics of Contact," 42-43.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 97.

needed the alliance with him, ensured that Uncas was once again the victor. The Commissioners reaffirmed that “the remnant of that [Pequot] nation should not be suffered (if the English could help it) either to be a distinct people, or to retayne the name of Pequatt, or to settle in the Pequatt country, but that they should all be divided betwixt the Narragansett & Mohegan Indians.”<sup>348</sup>

The Commissioners’ ruling was a significant defeat for Cassacinamon. Cassacinamon and Winthrop had misjudged colonial attitudes towards the Pequots. It also served as a reprimand to Winthrop Jr.; the Commissioners did not appreciate his attempts to insert himself into the power politics of the region, and his business with Cassacinamon and Uncas threatened the stability of the region.<sup>349</sup> Ten years after the Pequot War was still too soon in the minds of many English colonists to risk allowing the Pequots to live openly as such.<sup>350</sup> The 1647 petition exposed Cassacinamon as an open opponent of Uncas but resulted in little material gain for the Pequots. Cassacinamon lost his first attempt at freedom from Uncas because maintaining an alliance with Uncas was still in the best interest of Connecticut. Uncas knew this, and exploited that knowledge. In addition, Uncas still retained the support of John Mason. Mason was not the most popular Englishman in Connecticut, but he commanded a great deal of respect, and fear, from colonists and Algonquians alike. Therefore, the Commissioners continued to tolerate Uncas’s actions for the time being.

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<sup>348</sup>“July 1647,” *Acts*, I: 100-101.

<sup>349</sup>Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 120-121.

<sup>350</sup>“Williams to John Winthrop, 23 July 1638,” *RWC*, I: 168.

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The New England Anglo-Indian frontier experienced significant social and political upheaval in the years immediately following the Pequot War. As Uncas, Miantonomi, and Ninigret each asserted themselves as Native power brokers in the region, English authorities in Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay sought to exert their own authority over the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. The Pequots were caught in the midst of this. However, while the Pequots no longer had the military power they once did, their lands and people remained important factors in shaping regional politics. By adding the Pequot survivors and their lands to their existing power bases, leaders like Uncas shaped colonial politics for their own ends.

Although stripped of their former prominence, the Pequots were not destroyed, despite the efforts of English authorities to be rid of them and other Native groups to incorporate them. Even when divided amongst neighboring peoples, the Pequots retained a sense of their own unique peoplehood, as evidenced by the existence of Pequot towns within other tribal areas. Someone with the right connections and prerequisites for leadership could tap into that potential and provide the Pequots with the means of creating their own communities away from men like Uncas. Robin Cassacinamon was that leader. Cassacinamon's skills and likely hereditary claims ensured his rise as the leader of the Nameag Pequot community. His years of living in the Winthrop household guaranteed Cassacinamon's access to a powerful English family, and during this time he formed a lasting partnership with John Winthrop Jr. For a time, Uncas exploited the links Cassacinamon possessed to exert his authority over the Pequots and place them as tributaries in his network of Native villages. However, as soon as Winthrop Jr.

established a settlement near Nameag, Cassacinamon introduced a plan to remove the community from Uncas's sphere of influence. He cultivated his alliance with Winthrop Jr., who proved a persistent advocate for the Pequots, and strengthened the ties between the Nameag Pequots and the English. He petitioned the Commissioners of the United Colonies, demonstrating a familiarity with English legal proceedings. Despite the threats, intimidation, and the repeated refusal of English authorities to find in favor of the Pequots, Cassacinamon's plan was fruitful in one respect: Pequots continued to resettle at Nameag.

Although the Commissioners dismissed Cassacinamon's 1647 petition, the same ruling that had ordered the Pequots to remain in Uncas's authority also gave Cassacinamon a small thread of hope. The Commissioners reprimanded Uncas for his harsh treatment of the Pequots, demonstrating that the Commissioners grew tired of dealing with Uncas. For Cassacinamon to persuade the Commissioners to rule in his favor, he had to keep pushing Uncas so he would respond in increasingly outrageous and inappropriate ways. Though dangerous, this strategy had potential, but it required that Cassacinamon think quickly and trust that his public opposition to Uncas would persuade further Pequots to join him at Nameag.



## Chapter 4: Returning Home

In 1647, Robin Cassacinamon faced a serious dilemma. Having declared his intentions to free the Nameag Pequots from the Mohegan confederation, Cassacinamon and the Nameag community exposed themselves to certain retribution from the Mohegan grand sachem Uncas. Uncas had proved willing to use coercive force to compel the allegiance of the Nameag Pequots.<sup>351</sup> Now, Uncas had a favorable ruling from the Commissioners of the United Colonies that supported his claims. To Uncas, Cassacinamon was but a local leader in his Mohegan confederation, and he sought to remind Cassacinamon of his place in the new Mohegan order.<sup>352</sup> Cassacinamon and the Pequots at Nameag disagreed. However, after losing the first round of petitions to persuade English authorities to intercede on their behalf, the next steps Cassacinamon took were of critical importance; another mistake might spell the end of Nameag.

Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots remained obstinate in their refusal of the Mohegan leader. Cassacinamon retained the support of John Winthrop Jr., and the Pequot sachem needed that support to continue with his agenda. Even as the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance suffered the 1647 setback, new opportunities presented themselves to the struggling Pequot leader and his English partner. The Anglo-Algonquian frontier of seventeenth-century southern New England remained a shifting mass of Native and English alliances, political intrigue, and transformed communities.

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<sup>351</sup>“ The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England 1643-1651, in *Plymouth Colonial Records*, Vol. IX (Boston: William White, 1859; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1968), I: 97, 100-103 (Hereafter *Acts*).

<sup>352</sup> Eric Spencer Johnson, ““Some by Flatteries and Others By Threatenings”: Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England,” PhD dissertation, Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993, 39.

While Uncas struggled to retain control over his tributaries, the Mohegans and the Narragansetts continued their ongoing battles as each sought to be the premier Native power in the region. As the Native confederations battled among themselves, the New England colonies expanded, eager to exert dominance over the frontier for their own benefit. In this shifting political environment, anthropologist Eric Spencer Johnson argues that local Native leaders “could increase their communities’ autonomy by breaking unequal relationships with principal sachems and forging new, more favorable alliances.”<sup>353</sup> As circumstances in the region changed, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. deliberately inserted themselves into tense political situations. Connected to both Algonquian and English political systems, Cassacinamon exploited both to achieve his objectives for the Pequots. Given the Pequots status after the Pequot War, the only way Cassacinamon could accomplish his goals was through utilizing both systems. Cassacinamon pushed forward with his agenda by relying on two important tactics. First, he controlled and manipulated information through direct personal action as an informant, interpreter, and negotiator. Second, he and Winthrop Jr. encouraged members of the Nameag community, both Pequot and English, to engage in physical acts of disobedience – civil and otherwise.<sup>354</sup> Cassacinamon coordinated these tactics alongside

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<sup>353</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>354</sup>Ibid., 1-2, 105, 108. In his work, Eric Spencer Johnson examines several political strategies and processes that Native leaders in seventeenth-century southern New England engaged in “through which political authority was acquired, legitimized, and/or resisted.” Johnson identifies several key strategies used by Algonquian leaders: ideology, political alliance, marriage and kinship, coercion, trade, settlement pattern, and manipulation of material culture and material symbols. I argue that Cassacinamon, like Uncas, used these strategies to pursue his own agenda for the Pequots in the post-war period following the Pequot War of 1637.

John Winthrop Jr. and the Nameag Pequots. In so doing, Cassacinamon and the Pequots achieved a victory that ensured their survival. But it was not without risks.

## I

With the Pequot business temporarily settled, Uncas turned his attention from Nameag to other threats pressing his Mohegan confederation. These renewed challenges came from the Pocumtuck sachem Sequassen, whose territory lay west of Mohegan along the Connecticut River, and from the Niantics and Narragansetts to the east, who, after the murder of Miantonomi (which Uncas had orchestrated), were led by the sachem Ninigret.<sup>355</sup> The Narragansetts, being the most populous Native confederation in southern New England, posed a significant challenge to Uncas, even with the strength he had accumulated since the Pequot War. Conflicts between the two groups continued throughout the 1640s, and Uncas found his resources stretched to their limit fending off these new attacks.<sup>356</sup> As these other leaders distracted Uncas, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. rebounded from their 1647 setback; by the following year, they again challenged Uncas's authority as principal sachem over the Nameag Pequots.

Why did Cassacinamon stay allied with the younger Winthrop? If an alliance with John Winthrop Jr. did not provide Cassacinamon with desirable results, why did the Pequot sachem not abandon the Englishman for another, more successful, advocate? Loyalty and opportunity may best explain Cassacinamon's actions, as well as the younger

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<sup>355</sup>Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 125-130; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 123-129, 158-163. *Acts*, I: 66, 68; Petar A. Thomas, *In the Maelstrom of Change: The Indian Trade and Cultural Process in the Middle Connecticut River Valley, 1635-1665* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 150; Ninigret was of Narragansett-Niantic heritage, and maintained kinship ties with both confederations. He used these connections to claim a leadership position in both groups.

<sup>356</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 124-140; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 123-130.

Winthrop's. It appears that Cassacinamon did not seek another English advocate during these early struggles. After eight years of negotiating with the Winthrop family, and living with them for at least part of that time, by 1646 Cassacinamon had come to lead the Pequots settled at Nameag. The Nameag Pequots had been incorporated into the Mohegan confederation after the Pequot War; under Algonquian and English customs, they owed allegiance to Uncas.<sup>357</sup> And yet, from the beginning of Winthrop Jr.'s involvement with Nameag, he dealt exclusively with Cassacinamon. The 1645 agreement that Winthrop Jr. had drawn up to create Pequot Plantation was not signed by Uncas but by Cassacinamon, who was already described as "Governour and Chief Councelor among the Pequots."<sup>358</sup> Thus, from the outset, John Winthrop Jr. recognized Cassacinamon as the leader of the Nameag Pequots. From that point onward, the younger Winthrop had been a vocal advocate of Cassacinamon and the Pequots. The younger Winthrop's dogged persistence may have been a rare commodity Cassacinamon could not take for granted.

The same question could be asked of John Winthrop Jr. John Winthrop Jr. assumed a tremendous political risk by supporting Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots. While the Winthrop family was politically connected throughout the region, the only political office Winthrop held in Connecticut was his commission to govern Pequot Plantation.<sup>359</sup> By 1648, it appeared to outside observers that the younger Winthrop had

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<sup>357</sup> Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 53-61, 103-105, 209.

<sup>358</sup> "Deed of Webucksham and Washcomo to John Winthrop, Jr., January 1645," *Winthrop Papers*, 1645-49, ed. Allyn B. Forbes (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1947), 5: 4-5 (Hereafter *WP*).

<sup>359</sup>J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), 1: 157 (Hereafter *CR*). John Winthrop Jr. would at various points serve as governor of

attached his political future to a limited Algonquian community. His previous efforts on behalf of Cassacinamon had resulted in failure, if not great personal embarrassment.<sup>360</sup> Winthrop Jr. risked alienating the very men who gave him his commission. Soon, other colonial leaders — and even personal relations — pressured the younger Winthrop to abandon the Pequots. Not surprisingly, John Mason, Uncas's chief advocate among the English, was one of those voices. Despite Uncas's frequent expansionist endeavors, Mason advised Winthrop Jr. to “encourage your people [English and Pequot] that they be not over much troubled.” The Nameag community may “scope at the Monheags,” but Mason assured him that “they are limited and cannot goe beyond their tether.”<sup>361</sup> Given the ongoing struggle between their respective Native allies, Mason's advice was likely not accepted at face value. However, the younger Winthrop also received pleas from his family to let the matter with the Pequots drop. John Winthrop Sr. went so far as to beg his son from his deathbed in 1649 to cease pushing the Pequot issue. In a letter from his brother Adam, Winthrop Jr. learned that his father requested “that you wold strive no more about the Pequod Indians but leave theme to the commissioners' order.”<sup>362</sup>

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the Connecticut colony. However in 1647, the only major political post he held was the commission to govern Pequot Plantation.

<sup>360</sup>“September 1646,” *Acts* I: 73-74; “The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103. In 1646, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. attempted to implicate Uncas in a murder plot against the Pequot-Niantic Wequashcook. The assassin, an Indian named Wampushet, at first said that Uncas paid him to carry out the hit. However, once in front of the Commissioners, and with Uncas staring him down, he changed his story to say that Cassacinamon had paid him to lie and falsely implicate Uncas. The Commissioners dismissed the charges, and were greatly annoyed with Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. for, in their view, wasting their time. In their 1647 ruling, the Commissioners were clear in their edict: Cassacinamon and the Pequots should submit to Uncas's authority, and Winthrop Jr. should cease aiding and abetting Cassacinamon's troublesome plans.

<sup>361</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 4, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 250.

Native leaders who sought Winthrop Jr.'s support for themselves also attempted to break his bond with Cassacinamon. One such leader was the Narragansett-Niantic sachem Ninigret. After the death of Miantonomi, Ninigret — connected to the Niantics and the Narragansetts via kinship bonds — led not only the Niantics, but a faction of the Narragansetts. According to Roger Williams, Ninigret and other Narragansett and Niantic councilors thought that “Causasenamon and the rest of the Pequots” should “be as Your [Winthrop Jr.’s] Little dogs but not as Your Confederates.” Treating such a lowly group as if they were his equals was, Williams related to Winthrop Jr., an action “they say is unworthy [to] yourselfe.”<sup>363</sup> For sachems like Ninigret, Winthrop Jr. wasted his time with Cassacinamon; if Winthrop Jr. wanted to challenge Uncas and position himself as a mediator between the English and Natives, he was better served by siding with more powerful Native allies.<sup>364</sup>

Despite the pleading from family, and warnings from other Native and English leaders, Winthrop Jr. continued supporting Cassacinamon. John Winthrop Jr. maintained designs of becoming a major “cultural broker” between the Connecticut colonists and the Indians. Despite the setbacks they faced extricating the Nameag Pequots from Uncas,

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<sup>362</sup>John Mason to John Winthrop Jr., 4 September 1648, *WP*, 5:250; “Adam Winthrop to John Winthrop Jr., 14 March 1649, *WP*, 5:319; Oberg, *Uncas*, 123.

<sup>363</sup>“To John Winthrop, Jr., 10 October 1648,” in Glenn W. La Fantasie, ed., *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 2 volumes, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), I: 252. (Hereafter *RWC*).

<sup>364</sup>The Narragansetts experienced a power vacuum after Miantonomi’s death. Ninigret, related to the Narragansett sachem Canonicus through marriage, stepped in to fill the void and gained a faction of the Narragansett confederation. Ninigret attempted to ingratiate himself with John Winthrop Jr. In February 1647, he told Winthrop Jr. “that he was resolved to be acquainted” with the English “and keepe peace with them and doe whatsoever they shall require in reason.” “John Winthrop Jr. to Edward Hopkins, February 10, 1647,” *WP*, 5: 127; *The Journal of John Winthrop*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James S. Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: 1996), 681; Oberg, *Uncas*, 126.

Cassacinamon and the Pequots still provided Winthrop with the perfect opportunity to be that mediator.<sup>365</sup> For the younger Winthrop, the chance to obstruct Uncas and assert greater English control over the Connecticut frontier proved an invaluable opportunity. Perhaps he persisted with Cassacinamon because he felt that the Nameag Pequots were the right kind of “dependable Indians”: there were enough Pequots in the community to perform various functions as hunters, laborers, and informants, but they were not powerful enough to strike out on their own.

Yet, the younger Winthrop’s consistent refusal to listen to anyone — English or Native — who advised him to abandon Cassacinamon suggests that something more than political goals bound the two men together. Winthrop Jr. had known Cassacinamon for a decade by this point. They united to build Pequot Plantation. His steadfast commitment to Cassacinamon suggests that loyalty and friendship bound the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance together, above any other tangible advantages it may have produced.

One year after the ruling against Cassacinamon, Uncas complained to the Commissioners that “noe Conformety hath hitherto been yealded” by the Nameag Pequots to follow the edict, despite being ordered to “returne to their former subjection to Uncas.”<sup>366</sup> While Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. filed petitions with the authorities, the Pequots and the English settlers at Nameag/Pequot Plantation engaged in more direct acts

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<sup>365</sup>Wendy B. St. Jean, “Inventing Guardianship: The Mohegan Indians and Their “Protectors,” *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 72, Issue 3, 1999, 379; Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero’s America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676* (Chapel Hill, NC: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 103-111. For essays on the importance of cultural brokers in the social, political, economic and spiritual relationships between Europeans and Indigenous Americans, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, ed., *Between Indian White Worlds: The Cultural Brokers* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

<sup>366</sup>“September 1648,” *Acts I*: 111.

of civil disobedience and sabotage. Uncas complained that two Mohegan canoes were stolen by the English, who refused to return them to their rightful owners. Along with these property thefts, the Pequot inhabitants of Nameag prevented Mohegans from fishing in the Pequot/Thames River.<sup>367</sup> Given the seasonal subsistence patterns of the indigenous people of southern New England, this type of obstruction proved significant.

The Pequots did not limit their obstructionist activities to the Thames riverbed. Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots continued hunting in the disputed Pequot territory. The Nameag Pequots were not alone in their hunts; individuals from the eastern Pawcatuck Pequot community frequently joined Cassacinamon's men. Once again, the Pequots deliberately violated the usufruct rights claimed by Uncas, just as they had done before the Nameag raid.<sup>368</sup> By the fall of 1648, the Nameag and Pawcatuck Pequots were also joined by some Narragansett hunting parties sent by Ninigret. Control over the former Pequot territory proved an ongoing source of contention between the Mohegans, Narragansetts, Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay; additional stress could potentially escalate these tensions into a full-scale crisis. By ignoring Uncas's presumed claims and the Commissioners' rulings, Cassacinamon and the Pequots (whether they were from Nameag or from Wequashcook's Pawcatuck group), directly challenged established authorities, and goaded them to take action. The fact that both Pequot communities were involved in these actions suggests that a continued level of kinship, cooperation, and

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<sup>367</sup>“Letter from Captain John Mason, June 1649,” *Acts*, II: 417.

<sup>368</sup>“September 1646,” *Acts*, I: 72-74. The Pawcatuck Pequots were Narragansett-Niantic tributaries and were led by the Pequot-Niantic named Wequashcook.



coordination existed between the two groups despite the efforts of the English, Mohegans, and Narragansetts to dissolve them as a distinct, recognizable people.<sup>369</sup>

As Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots stepped up their attacks on Uncas's usufructary rights, Wequashcook made overtures to John Mason to relocate his community of Pequots from their imposed Narragansett affiliation, and place themselves under English jurisdiction. In a letter from Mason to Winthrop Jr. dated September 9, 1648, Mason acknowledged that Wequashcook was staying with him at Mason's home in Seabrook, and that the Pequot-Niantic leader pledged that "he neyther hath nor will have any hand with the Nannoganset in their plottinge against Oncos or the English." Mason confessed to Winthrop Jr. that while he tended to believe Wequashcook, he desired "to understand your [Winthrop Jr.'s] thoughts in that particular" matter.<sup>370</sup>

The timing of these events – Cassacinamon's renewed hunting excursions, Wequashcook's entreaties to Mason, and Mason's questions to Winthrop Jr. – cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. It certainly demonstrates that by 1648, John Winthrop Jr. was the recognized Pequot "expert" among English authorities.<sup>371</sup> In that regard, the younger Winthrop's goal of becoming an intermediary between English and Native was successful. That Cassacinamon's counterpart among the eastern Pequot settlement

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<sup>369</sup>“The Hartford Treaty with the Narragansetts and the Fenwick Letters,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 46 (1982): 355-356 (Hereafter *NEHGR*); Oberg, *Uncas*, 85.

<sup>370</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 9, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 250-251. Despite the proclamations of the 1638 Treaty of Hartford, which decreed that the Pequots living among the Mohegans and Narragansetts were to be fully absorbed by those two confederations, never to be referred to as Pequots again, the Pequot communities affiliated with those tribes had maintained their own separate communities and distinctions as Pequots. Cassacinamon's Nameag community had incorporated several Pequots who were technically affiliated with the Narragansetts, suggesting the continued strength of Pequot identity and kinship ties.

<sup>371</sup>Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 114-115, 125, 128.

approached Mason, not Uncas, with his offer suggests that both Pequot leaders and communities found a direct alliance with English authorities preferable to forced affiliations with Algonquian confederations. This desire on the part of Cassacinamon and Wequashcook to break away from the Mohegans and the Narragansetts-Niantics – politically and physically - can “only be understood against the background of Indian politics,” an awareness that the relationships between the English and their Native allies and opponents “were inextricably linked to struggles within and among Native polities.”<sup>372</sup> Cassacinamon and Wequashcook sought separate Pequot communities, and they stood a better chance of achieving that goal by forming a direct political alliance with the English. If such an alliance also obstructed the plans of the Mohegans and Narragansetts, that was fine with the Pequots.

While the Pequots hunts angered the Mohegan sachem, tensions escalated further when Ninigret sent Narragansett hunters into the disputed zone. That Ninigret would do this was not altogether surprising; he hated Uncas and remained committed to destroying Mohegan power in the region.<sup>373</sup> However, in a series of rapid exchanges between John Winthrop Jr., Roger Williams, and John Mason between September and October of 1648, it became clear that Cassacinamon was directly involved in bringing Ninigret into the dispute. A little over a week after he had cordially reached out to the younger Winthrop seeking his advice on how to proceed with Wequashcook, Mason demanded answers from Winthrop Jr. as to why “Nynygreat [Ninigret] with diverse others of that broode are resolved sodaynely to hunt all over the Pequot cuntrey.” Cassacinamon, whom Mason

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<sup>372</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 99.

<sup>373</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 126-128.

dismissed in his letter as merely being “your man Robin the Indian,” had reportedly given the Narragansett-Niantic sachem word from Winthrop Jr. that his people had Winthrop’s “allowance” to hunt in the disputed zones.<sup>374</sup>

While he had no concern about displaying his anger towards Cassacinamon and Ninigret in his letter, Mason could not accuse Winthrop Jr. of deliberately causing trouble. Winthrop Jr. was too well-connected, even if Mason believed the younger Winthrop knew more than he let on. Still, his words to Winthrop Jr. are replete with passive-aggressive innuendo. Mason assured Winthrop Jr. that when he heard the accusations that Winthrop, via Cassacinamon, had granted this permission to Ninigret, he believed the younger Winthrop was innocent, “knowing that you will not engage in such a matter of soe ill savor with the Eng[lish] especially as it stands.” Instead, he advised Winthrop Jr. to “please discountenance them whereby to hinder their proceeding in any such way of hunting.” Still, the actions of Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and the Narragansetts did not go unnoticed, and if they continued they would not go unpunished. Mason warned Winthrop Jr. that he would “give them [the offending Indian groups] a vissent which I suppose will not be very pleasing to them.”<sup>375</sup> This threat, coming from the man who had torched the Mystic fort eleven years earlier, could not be taken lightly. Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. ignored the threats.

Winthrop Jr.’s response to Mason’s allegations was calculated and measured. First, he offered advice of his own to Mason, telling him that this report was probably “brought to you but from Surmises and Jelousies of the Mohegens” and should thus be

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<sup>374</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 17, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 253.

<sup>375</sup>*Ibid.*

taken into careful consideration. “I told him [Ninigret] I could not give him licence,” Winthrop Jr. wrote, because he believed “the privaledge to belong only to the English.” However, Winthrop Jr. admitted that he “said little against it” when he heard about Ninigret’s desire to hunt in the region, and that “it may be my silence about it he might take for consent and thinke it sufficient allowance.”<sup>376</sup> The answer offered the younger Winthrop plausible deniability; he never specifically said these groups could hunt in the region, but since he did not argue the English position on the matter forcefully enough, Cassacinamon and Ninigret acted on their own. In the letter, Winthrop Jr. shared — on the surface at least — English frustrations over the independent actions of the Natives. The reality was much different.

Roger Williams, writing on behalf of Ninigret and the Narragansetts, sent Winthrop Jr. a letter clarifying the Narragansetts’ position. Williams informed Winthrop Jr. that “Nenekunat [Ninigret] made great Lamentation that you had enteretained hard thoughts of him in this business.” However, despite the confusion, the Narragansetts hoped that Winthrop Jr. would not “rob Nenekunat of those hunting places wch the Commissioners gave him leave to make use of and he with the English had fought for with the Expençe of much treasure and hazard of his Life.” When he considered Cassacinamon’s role in distributing “questionable” information, Williams offered Winthrop Jr. some “friendly advise” from the Narragansetts. “Causasenamon and the rest of the Pequits,” the Narragansetts had said, should “be as Your Litle dogs but not as Your Confederates, wch they say is unworthy of Your selfe.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr., to John Mason, September 19, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 255.

<sup>377</sup>“To John Winthrop, Jr. 10 October 1648,” *RWC*, I: 251-252.

This series of exchanges showcased one of the most significant abilities available to Cassacinamon: his role as an interpreter and negotiator to control and spread information and misinformation. Throughout the 1640s and 1650s, Cassacinamon appears in the colonial records as an envoy, interpreter, and purveyor of information between various English officials and Native leaders.<sup>378</sup> According to Eric Spencer Johnson, controlling information was “an important way in which Indians manipulated, or tried to manipulate, their English allies” during this period in the seventeenth century. Cassacinamon, who was fluent in Pequot-Mohegan, English, and likely Narragansett-Niantic, proved to be a valuable asset on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. Skilled linguists like Cassacinamon held an essential role because “almost all the diplomatic proceedings between English and Native were carried out through Indian interpreters.” According to Johnson, while several Natives were multilingual, very few Englishmen spoke indigenous languages. This language barrier meant that “information from Native sources could be difficult to verify,” making independent confirmation a “problem” for English leaders. The battle over accurate information, combined with the knowledge that the Natives on whom they depended could very easily deceive them, contributed to the guarded or outright negative attitudes that English officials had of Native peoples.<sup>379</sup> Native leaders

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<sup>378</sup>Cassacinamon appears in several records acting as an interpreter and purveyor of information. “To John Winthrop, Jr., 20 March 1649/50,” *RWC*, I: 311; “John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 17, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 253; “John Haynes to John Winthrop, Jr., 1649/50,” *WP*, 6: 12-13; “Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., 1649/50,” *WP*, 6: 18; “John Winthrop, Jr. to John Haynes, February 16, 1649/50,” *WP*, 6: 20; “Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., 20.1.1649/50,” *WP*, 6: 28; “Deposition of thomas Minor, Robert Hempstead, and William Nicholl, April 17, 1650,” *WP*, 6: 34; “Nicholas Augur to John Winthrop, Jr., June 17, 1653,” *WP*, 6: 300; “Confirmation by Massachusetts of Iumse’s Deed to John Winthrop, Jr., November 25, 1653,” *WP*, 6: 349.

knew they had a distinct advantage when it came to gathering intelligence on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier, and they acted accordingly.

In this multilingual environment, Cassacinamon transformed his position as an “information broker” into a distinct political advantage. Seen in this light, the 1648 hunting controversy takes on an added significance. Ninigret’s comments to Winthrop Jr. regarding Cassacinamon are important. Ninigret’s advice to Winthrop Jr. — to treat Cassacinamon as if he were his “little dog” — suggests that Cassacinamon utilized his position as an interpreter and intermediary as an explicitly political role, and that he deliberately manipulated the lines of communication to foment a crisis. Ninigret’s dehumanizing epithet intended to belittle Cassacinamon, and to warn Winthrop Jr. against treating an underling as if he were an equal, as did Mason’s angry dismissal of Cassacinamon as “Robin your Indian.” However, while the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, and their English advocates all dismissed Cassacinamon, the fact remained that he had either engineered or at the very least exploited an already tense situation for his own advantage. That Winthrop Jr. did not vehemently deny or disavow Cassacinamon’s actions indicates that he knew more than he revealed in his denial to John Mason. Given Cassacinamon’s previous history of petitions and actions, taken on his own and with Winthrop Jr., it is doubtful that Cassacinamon simply acted on “orders” from the younger Winthrop. The two men had coordinated their efforts for some time. This calculated manipulation of information only makes sense if Cassacinamon believed a conflict between the Mohegans and Narragansetts could benefit the Pequots. Knowing

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<sup>379</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 108; “Edward Hopkins to John Winthrop, Jr., March 20, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 321-322. See also James Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

that tensions existed over the contested Pequot territory, it would be easy for Cassacinamon, as an intermediary between various Algonquian and English communities, to fan the flames of a dispute between the Mohegans and Narragansetts. In the chaos of a conflict, Cassacinamon and Nameag could benefit in either the death or disgrace of their Native rivals in the struggle, or by siding with the English (via Winthrop Jr.) in quelling it. Such action could garner an award from the English, namely Cassacinamon's request to remove the Pequots from Uncas's authority.

If this were Cassacinamon's plan, it was one with a great deal of personal risk. If he deliberately instigated a fight, he opened himself up to punishment or death; the Commissioners of the United Colonies stepped aside when Uncas executed Miantonomi because they felt it was in their interest to do so.<sup>380</sup> However, unlike Miantonomi, Cassacinamon possessed dual layers of protection. For all of the problems he caused for Uncas, the Mohegan sachem never targeted Cassacinamon in the way he orchestrated Miantonomi's death. Uncas used coercive force and innuendo to try and force Cassacinamon's compliance, but he never set out to remove him entirely. Cassacinamon proved too valuable a link between Uncas and the Nameag Pequots to simply remove. Cassacinamon possessed the support of the Nameag community, and Uncas wanted to keep Nameag within his confederation; if he eliminated Cassacinamon it may have driven Nameag even closer to the English. There is also the possibility that Cassacinamon held some kind of kinship ties to one of Uncas's wives, the woman he procured from the Winthrop's in 1638. If they were tied in such a manner, Uncas faced a situation comparable to what Sassacus faced prior to the Pequot War. Sassacus could not

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<sup>380</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 104-107.

eliminate Uncas, despite his repeated attempts at subversion, due to their bonds of kinship; perhaps something similar was at work between Cassacinamon and Uncas in the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>381</sup> Cassacinamon also had a well-connected ally in John Winthrop Jr. Thus, Cassacinamon possessed certain Algonquian and English protections that were denied Miantonomi, and that distinguished Cassacinamon from his predecessor Sassacus. The previous decade, the Pequots were the only Algonquian confederation without English allies; Cassacinamon rectified that situation, out of necessity. However, Cassacinamon still risked reprisal from Uncas or the Commissioners if he overplayed his hand.

By September 1648, the Commissioners had had enough. Frustrated with the continued refusal by Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and Winthrop Jr. to follow their orders, and presented with evidence of Cassacinamon's troublemaking, the Commissioners issued a new decree. The Commissioners ordered that it was "Now thought fit and concluded that Mr. John Winthrape bee informed of the continued minds And Resolucions of the Comisrs for their [Nameag Pequots] returne" to Uncas<sup>382</sup> After they reminded Winthrop Jr. as to who truly was the proper English authorities in the region, the Commissioners once again ruled that "Uncas shall have order, & Lib[erty] by Constrainte" to force the Pequots to submit to his authority. The Commissioners in no

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<sup>381</sup> John W. DeForest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut-From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, Connecticut: WM. Jas. Hamersley, 1851; reprint, Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1964), 84. *CR*, 3: 479-480; *CR*, 3: 479-480; Oberg, *Uncas*, 48; Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native Peoples of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman, OK, 1996), 151; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: 1986), 205-206, 215; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 54-55; "To John Winthrop, 23 July 1638," *RWC*, I: 168; Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* [1643], John J. Teunissen and Evelyn J. Hinz, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 206.

<sup>382</sup>"September 1648," *Acts* I: 111;



uncertain terms advised Winthrop “that the Government of Connecticut will provide hee [Uncas] bee not therein opposed by any English Nor the Peaquats or any of them harbored or sheltered in any of their houses.”<sup>383</sup>

For two months Winthrop Jr. received repeated reminders of the Commissioner’s ruling. In October, John Mason wrote to the younger Winthrop, and told him to prepare for the reality that “Onkos shall have libertie to fetch his Indians to their former place who are now residing at Nameag.” He also made it clear that “severall Eng: [b]oth to witness to the Carriag of the desig[n] and that there be noe wronge done to the English of Na[meag].” While he assured Winthrop Jr. that the English settlers at Nameag would not be hurt, Mason reiterated that “the English of Nameage are required by the Comissioners order that they doe not Enterteine any of Nameag Indians or there goodes unto their uses nor any way hinder Onkos in the prosecucion of this service.” He closed his letter by telling Winthrop Jr. that “much is desired that you should be made acquainted” with the ruling, “as alsoe the rest of your neighbors.” Mason’s missive was followed by word from Edward Hopkins on November 1, 1648, in a letter that reiterated the Commissioners’ orders.<sup>384</sup> Uncas was coming. Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots must submit to the order. The English must not interfere. No excuses would be tolerated this time. Yet Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. still refused to comply.

On November 21, 1648, Uncas and John Mason received leave from the Commissioners to march on Nameag. Uncas was given “leave by violence” to force the Pequots to submit, although he was once again reminded to leave the English settlers

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<sup>383</sup>“September 1648,” *Acts*, I: 112.

<sup>384</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., October 1648,” *WP*, 5: 263; “Edward Hopkins to John Winthrop, Jr., November 1, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 276.

alone.<sup>385</sup> Hoping to avoid the hassles that had resulted from his 1646 raid on Nameag, Uncas included English officials as observers, and presented what he saw as a reasonable solution. However, while Uncas worked closely with the Commissioners on this issue, that proximity did not make him an English pawn.<sup>386</sup> The Mohegan grand sachem manipulated the English into helping him keep a group of his wayward tributaries in line. Uncas may have been prepared for this raid, but the same held true for Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. They convinced the men of Nameag — Pequot and English, as well as the local constable — to obstruct Uncas’s mission.<sup>387</sup>

Uncas’s second raid on Nameag was an ugly and violent confrontation. The Mohegans injured Pequot men and women, stripped them of their clothes, destroyed or stole their possessions, and carried away their food supplies. The constable and colonists in the English settlement tried to intercede on behalf of the Pequots, but were rebuffed.<sup>388</sup> The debacle at Nameag generated another call to the Commissioners for arbitration, yet this new round of hearings produced unexpected results. This time, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. received more support for their case, and that support came from prominent colonial administrators.

## II

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<sup>385</sup>“Edward Hopkins to John Mason, November 21, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 281-282.

<sup>386</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 123; Kevin A. McBride, “The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period,” in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, Robert S. Grumet, ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 85; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 123.

<sup>387</sup>“Edward Hopkins to John Mason, 21 Nov. 1648,” *WP*, 5: 281-282; “John Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., 3 Feb. 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 311.

<sup>388</sup>*Ibid*; Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 130.

The second raid on Nameag convinced other prominent colonial leaders that Uncas had gone too far. In January of 1649, Roger Williams wrote to John Winthrop Jr., pledging his support in Winthrop's subsequent petition directed against Uncas and John Mason for their actions at Nameag the previous November, actions that Williams "feare[d] he [Mason] miscaried." Williams admitted that Mason wrote to him several times, telling him "of some extraordinary Lifts against Onkas and that he will favour him, but no more then Religion and Reason bids him." Williams wondered "how it stands with Religion and Reason that such a monstrous Hurrie and Affrightment should be offered to an English Town either by Indians or English, unpunished." He then urged the younger Winthrop to "heape Coales of Fire on Capt: Masons head, conquer evill with good but be not cowardly and overcome with any evill." While those "coales of fire" were likely metaphorical, the sentiment was clear. John Winthrop Sr. (several weeks before his 1649 death bed plea to let the matter with the Pequots drop) also endorsed his son. Although he wished that the younger Winthrop's constable "had forborne to meddle with them," he was not "greatly sorry for Uncas his outrage" in failing to achieve his goals with Nameag. In fact, Winthrop Sr. hoped that Uncas's latest overly aggressive actions at Nameag would "give the Commissioners occasion to take stricter Course with him [Uncas]."<sup>389</sup> The senior Winthrop was worried about his son, but both Winthrop Sr. and Williams recognized the political implications if the situation with the Nameag Pequots continued to deteriorate. Public support from other well-known and influential colonial authorities provided Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. the kind of attention they had hoped would surface after the first petition in 1647. Now that the necessary outside

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<sup>389</sup> "To John Winthrop, Jr., 29 January 1648/49," *RWC*, I: 269; "John Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., 3 Feb. 1648/49," *WP*, 5: 311.

support had surfaced, Cassacinamon and Winthrop seized it as leverage in their bid to place the Pequots under direct English jurisdiction.

The chaotic events surrounding Uncas's second raid greatly displeased the Commissioners.<sup>390</sup> On top of that, Cassacinamon and the Pequots still remained at Nameag, so the raid failed. Two important facts stand out. No specific mention is made as to whether or not people were seriously injured or killed, only vague references that something bad had happened. This is unusual because records of other incidents at Nameag mention when people were injured or when losses of life occurred.<sup>391</sup> However, the records are curiously silent with regard to the November 1648 incident. There are also no official reprimands from the Commissioners of the United Colonies against Cassacinamon or John Winthrop Jr. Their silence on the matter is curious, given their previous adamant demands that the two men not defy their orders. If the senior Winthrop's words had any truth to them, beyond just a father speaking out of concern for his son, they suggest that Uncas acted in a way that the English observers sent by the Commissioners to oversee the events found objectionable. If that is the case, then their silence on Cassacinamon's and Winthrop Jr.'s refusal to comply with the order is understandable. The Commissioners finally understood that Cassacinamon would continue to make his case and cause trouble for Uncas until his demands were met.

Cassacinamon grew bolder in his defiance, and his plans directly involved his counterpart Wequashcook. Before the second raid on Nameag, Wequashcook had

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<sup>390</sup> "To John Winthrop, Jr., and John Mason, 26 August 1649," *RWC*, I: 293.

<sup>391</sup> "Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., August 1649," *WP*, 6: 359; "John Winthrop, Jr. to John Hopkins, August 1649," *WP*, 6: 360. Connecticut historian Walter Woodward believes that the raid happened sometime between January 17 and January 29, 1649, based on internal dating in Winthrop's surviving correspondence. See Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 130.

approached John Mason with overtures for an alliance with the Englishman, but the business with Cassacinamon and Nameag interfered with that particular discussion.<sup>392</sup> Despite the chaos that surrounded the Nameag Pequots, or perhaps because of it, Wequashcook had not let the matter go. By early 1649, Roger Williams wrote to John Winthrop, Jr., having “heard of Wequashcucks carrying of Peag to Capt. Mason.” The exchange of wampum (peag) was often the first step in negotiations between disparate parties in indigenous southern New England, so it appeared that Wequashcook still desired an alliance with Mason.<sup>393</sup>

While other English authorities appeared interested in Wequashcook’s offer,<sup>394</sup> Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. dealt with this possible challenge to their positions as Pequot leader and advocate. On March 8, 1649, Mason wrote to Winthrop Jr. and told him that Wequashcook again visited Mason at Seabrook. Wequashcook complained “of an injury done as he sayth to one of his men by your servant Jno: Austin...whoe hat as he affirmeth take a Cannoe of his and keeps it from him by force having noe just cause soe to doe.” Mason pointedly looked to the younger Winthrop “to enquire into the matter: that right may be doe done and if the Cannoe be deteyned wrongfully that it may be restored to the owner.”<sup>395</sup> Wequashcook then left Mason at Seabrook, and traveled to Nameag to reclaim his man’s property. Cassacinamon and his lieutenant Obechiquod did not return the canoe. Instead, Cassacinamon seized Wequashcook and refused to release

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<sup>392</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., September 9, 1648,” *WP*, 5: 250-251.

<sup>393</sup>“Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., January 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 313.

<sup>394</sup>“Edward Hopkins to John Winthrop, Jr., March 20, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 321-322.

<sup>395</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., March 8, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 317.

him. Cassacinamon, with Winthrop Jr.'s consent and cooperation, held Wequashcook under house arrest at Winthrop's house.<sup>396</sup>

When Mason heard what Cassacinamon had done he was furious, and demanded to know why "Weyquashcooke was lately bound by Abachickwood and Cassasenaman."<sup>397</sup> If they imprisoned Wequashcook for something he did while visiting with Mason, he offered to answer any of Winthrop Jr.'s questions. However, if the younger Winthrop "apprehend the matter soe weighty that he cannot be set free," Mason asked that Wequashcook "be carried to the common prison at Hartford," presumably to let the Commissioners adjudicate the matter. Mason's contempt for Cassacinamon is evident throughout the letter. Mason dismisses Cassacinamon's role and authority as Pequot leader, writing that "it is such a riddle that I doe not well understand nor can believe as yet that a Sachem should be bound by inferior men." A great deal of bad blood had passed between Mason and Cassacinamon, so it is understandable that Mason would favor Wequashcook and acknowledge him as sachem at the expense of Cassacinamon. He warned that "when reckonings are cast up these twoe viz: Rob[in] and the other will find some troble." This incident for Mason was just the latest in a long series of "problems" started by Cassacinamon, and he predicted that "Such things have past already that I suppose they will come to a second viewe, but I shall not particularize."<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup>John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., March 11, 1649," *WP*, 5: 318.

<sup>397</sup>John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., March 11, 1648[49]," *WP*, 5: 318.

<sup>398</sup>*Ibid.*

Why did Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. hold Wequashcook under house arrest? It was sure to anger Mason, but it may also have alienated the Pawcatuck Pequot community, the Commissioners of the United Colonies, and possibly Ninigret as well. By allowing Cassacinamon to hold Wequashcook at his house, Winthrop Jr. once again placed himself in a very contentious situation due to his attachment to the Pequots. It was hardly a coincidence that three days later, on March 13, Adam Winthrop wrote to his brother to pass him that message from their father whereby the senior Winthrop begged his son “as if it wear his last request,” to “strive no more about the pequod Indians but leave theme to the commissioners order.”<sup>399</sup> This bold action can only be understood by looking at the relationship between the two main Pequot communities, Nameag and Pawcatuck, and between their leaders Cassacinamon and Wequashcook. Despite attempts to keep the Pequots separated, the Pequots living at Nameag and Pawcatuck had sustained contact with one another. Since at least 1647, Cassacinamon had the support of several Pawcatuck Pequots who, although technically Narragansett tributaries, lived with Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots.<sup>400</sup>

The Pequots still possessed strong internal ties of kinship and community, and Cassacinamon drew strength from that in his attempts to break the Pequots away from Uncas. Yet, this did not mean the Pequots were free from internal conflict. The episode between Cassacinamon and Wequashcook illustrated possible tensions among the Pequots, specifically over the question of Pequot leadership. In February 1649, Thomas Stanton discussed a situation between Cassacinamon and Wequashcook with John

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<sup>399</sup>“Adam Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., March 14, 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 319.

<sup>400</sup>“The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103.

Winthrop Jr. According to Stanton, Cassacinamon had filed a complaint with Connecticut governor John Haynes. This complaint was an independent action on Cassacinamon's part, so Stanton (on Governor Haynes's behalf) wrote to Winthrop Jr. to get some insight on the situation. In the complaint, Cassacinamon asked Governor Haynes to address "the wronges don to him [Cassacinamon] by Wequascokes brother and to see him righted or to send them word that they may right him."<sup>401</sup> Several weeks later, Edward Hopkins wrote to John Winthrop Jr. to discuss Wequashcook's offer of creating an alliance with the English. Despite Hopkins general misgivings regarding the trustworthiness of the Native people, he described Wequashcook as being "cordiall to the English," and he agreed to hear Wequashcook's request. Wequashcook desired this alliance because he felt Ninigret treated him unfairly and violated the reciprocal obligations of the tributary relationship. According to Hopkins, Wequashcook's main objection to Ninigret was that the Narragansett-Niantic sachem endeavored "to settle the Pequotts that lately were att Nameocke, upon his owne proper land and to out him of that which was his cleare undoubted inheritance."<sup>402</sup> Hopkins wrote to Winthrop Jr. seeking his advice on the matter, and asked him to discover what "the true state of the case, and how farre there is a reality in the informacion now given."<sup>403</sup> In the midst of this endeavor, Cassacinamon seized Wequashcook and held him under house arrest at Nameag.

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<sup>401</sup>“Thomas Stanton to John Winthrop, Jr., February 22, 1649[50],” *WP*, 6: 23.

<sup>402</sup>“Edward Hopkins to John Winthrop, Jr., March 20, 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 322.

<sup>403</sup>*Ibid.*



These incidents suggest that for a brief time some kind of power struggle existed between Cassacinamon and Wequashcook over leadership of the Pequots. Each man sought to free the Pequots from their forced affiliations with other Algonquian confederations, and each sought alliances with the English as a way to bring about those changes. This invocation of English allies for political gain was a common strategy used by many Algonquian communities and leaders in the seventeenth century.<sup>404</sup> That this struggle occurred during a period of heightened tension between the English, the Mohegans, and the Narragansetts is also not surprising, for the shifting political situation provided the Pequots with an opportunity to press forward their agenda. However, despite the long-standing connections of kinship, and the shared goals that linked the Nameag and Pawcatuck communities, they were not a monolithic entity. It is likely that each man desired to be the Pequots' principal sachem. Both men used whatever resources were available to them to make that happen, including manipulating allies (English and Native alike) and exploiting the current political situation.

In this struggle between the Pequot leaders, Cassacinamon had the advantage. It was Cassacinamon's community at Nameag that experienced continuous growth after 1645, attracting not only Pequots who were tributaries of Uncas, but Narragansett-Niantic affiliated Pequots as well. The Nameag population rose to somewhere between 300-500 people.<sup>405</sup> It was Cassacinamon who possessed the alliance with the prominent Englishman that provided him with critical protections. And as his complaint to Governor Hayes regarding Wequashcook's brother demonstrated, Cassacinamon solicited

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<sup>404</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 99, 103-105.

<sup>405</sup>"The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok," July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 103.

other English authorities besides his ally John Winthrop Jr. to challenge any threats to his position as leader within the Pequot community. Even if those threats originated from other Pequots. Perhaps this explains why Wequashcook approached John Mason and Edward Hopkins with overtures of an alliance; an English-Pawcatuck alliance could counter the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance and strengthen his own Pequot community. If Hopkins were to be believed, Wequashcook approached the English because Ninigret was trying to undermine his authority in Pawcatuck by bringing all the Pequots into the Narragansett territory as tributaries. The Pawcatuck leader also wanted an English ally because, as Hopkins noted in his letter to Winthrop Jr., “some English that are beginning to build upon part of his ground, without his leave or consent.”<sup>406</sup>

If true, this explains why Hopkins wanted Winthrop Jr. to verify Wequashcook’s story. This overture to the English was a calculated ploy on Wequashcook’s part; it played on English fears concerning Ninigret’s expanding influence, as well as lingering English prejudices and fears regarding the Pequots. It is doubtful that Wequashcook objected to a course of action that united the Pequots. However, if such a plan resulted in Wequashcook losing his position of authority to Cassacinamon, that could explain his overtures to English authorities.

Cassacinamon met any potential challenge issued by Wequashcook with all the resources at his disposal. If diplomatic channels did not produce the desired results, Cassacinamon turned to more direct methods, which is how Wequashcook ended up under house arrest at Winthrop Jr.’s house at Nameag in March of 1649.<sup>407</sup> How long

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<sup>406</sup>“Edward Hopkins to John Winthrop, Jr., March 20, 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 322.

<sup>407</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., March 11, 1648/49,” *WP*, 5: 318.

Wequashcook was held there is not clear, but when he was released a new understanding appears to have been reached among Cassacinamon, Wequashcook, and the younger Winthrop. For his part, Winthrop Jr. began advocating on behalf of the Nameag Pequots and the Pawcatuck community.<sup>408</sup> The records do not indicate further antagonistic actions between the two Pequot leaders. However, when the dust had settled, Cassacinamon once again took center stage.

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As Cassacinamon and Wequashcook struggled for dominance over the Pequots, Uncas and Ninigret pursued their ongoing battle for regional supremacy. Each of the powerful Native sachems claimed that the other had sent warriors and hunters into their territories, and both argued to the English that the other had used the Pequots in ways that defied the stipulations of the 1638 Hartford Treaty. The crisis escalated in April of 1649. Uncas claimed to the Commissioners that Ninigret had sent an assassin to murder him. He then petitioned English authorities to help him achieve restitution. Ninigret denied the charge. While John Mason supported Uncas's claims, John Winthrop Jr., Roger Williams, and other English officials doubted the story. This did not mean however, that English officials (minus Williams) sided with Ninigret and the Narragansetts.<sup>409</sup> The

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<sup>408</sup>Sarah Louise Holmes, "'In Behalf of Myself & My People': Mashantucket Strategies in Defense of Their Rights," Ph.D. dissertation, (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, 2007), 65-66, 74; "Simon Willard to John Winthrop, Jr., with Enclosures, 1654," *WP*, 6: 458-476. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a powerful English family in the town of Stonington, the Williams, took up advocacy for the Pawcatuck Pequots. Stonington was the closest town to the Pawcatuck Pequots. Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 128-129; Eastern Pequot Tribe of Connecticut, "Being an Indian in Connecticut," Submitted to the Department of Acknowledgement and Recognition, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior (Washington, DC: 2000).

<sup>409</sup>"Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., April 1649," *WP*, 5: 326-327; *RWC*, I: 277-280.

escalating battle between Uncas and Ninigret gave Cassacinamon and John Winthrop Jr. another opening to exploit. The two men filed a new round of formal petitions to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, once again asking that Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots be removed from their tributary status to Uncas.

When Cassacinamon and Winthrop pressed forward with their new round of petitions, John Mason once again opposed the pair. Mason continued to defend his Mohegan ally, and in yet another letter to the Commissioners, written in June 1649, Mason provided an evidentiary list that, in his mind, justified Uncas's actions to the Commissioners. While the escalating situation was a cause for concern, Mason argued that the truly innocent party was, in fact, Uncas. It was Ninigret and the Narragansetts who had illegally entered territory the English considered theirs by right of conquest, and it was Ninigret who had hired someone to assassinate the Mohegan sachem. Thus, Ninigret bore the blame for this latest round of violence.<sup>410</sup>

Ninigret was not alone however. According to Mason, Cassacinamon's actions compounded these serious problems. Mason was again dismissive of Cassacinamon; he referred to the Pequot leader as "Robbin Servant to Mr. Winthrop," or simply as "Mr. Winthrop's Servant."<sup>411</sup> According to Mason, John Winthrop Jr. had empowered Cassacinamon with a false confidence, and he acted with impunity because of it. Cassacinamon used this alliance to deprive Uncas of "his men who lived [at] Nameag." Uncas tried to deal with Cassacinamon in a reasonable manner, but Cassacinamon refused to negotiate in good faith. Cassacinamon's arrogance affected not only his

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<sup>410</sup>Letter from Captain John Mason, June 1649," *Acts*, II: 416-417.

<sup>411</sup>*Ibid.*, 417-418.

relationship with Uncas, but his dealings with Wequashcook as well. Mason, still bitter over the house arrest of Wequashcook and his thwarted attempts at an alliance with the Pawcatuck Pequots, spoke of the “mistreatment” that Wequashcook had suffered at the hands of the Narragansetts, who forced him to fight against Uncas and to pay exorbitant amounts of tribute to them. Wequashcook was ill-treated by Cassacinamon as well, who threatened “that his [Cassacinamon’s] master shall there build and keepe Cowes and soe force him [Wequashcook] from thence.” Cassacinamon was a menace who did not contain his defiance to Nameag; he fomented the current troubles between Uncas, Ninigret, and the English. Cassacinamon “possessed and gave out that by his Masters [Winthrop Jr.’s] allowance the Nannogans: had liberty to hunt Pequot cuntrey.”<sup>412</sup> Uncas, if Mason were to be believed, only took aggressive action because there had been no other alternative; he was dealing with a band of ungrateful Pequots led by the conniving schemer Cassacinamon.

Mason attacked Cassacinamon’s character and battered Winthrop’s credibility as well. Mason emphasized that Winthrop Jr. aided and abetted the unauthorized Native hunts, actions which threatened the delicate balance between the major Native and English powers in the region. In so doing, Winthrop Jr. committed a “breach of Covenant with the Commissioners.”<sup>413</sup> Winthrop’s willful act of lawbreaking, and the “late insolencies” of the Nameag Pequots, threatened not only the stability of the region, but English claims to the territory.<sup>414</sup> As duly appointed officials of the United Colonies,

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<sup>412</sup>Ibid., 417-418.

<sup>413</sup>Ibid., 417-418.

<sup>414</sup>Ibid., 418.

Mason argued that the Commissioners should not let Winthrop get away with defying their orders. It may have seemed ironic that Mason would be the one to advocate a position of loyalty and devotion to the Commissioners, since he frequently found himself at odds with leading magistrates over his “highly partial” alliance with Uncas.<sup>415</sup> However, Mason’s appeals did not sway the Commissioners as they had after the first raid in 1646. Realizing that the moment was right, Winthrop Jr. once again issued another request on Cassasinamon’s behalf.

In July 1649, Winthrop Jr. sent a formal declaration to the Commissioners of the United Colonies at their meeting in Boston, where he once again asked that the Pequots be allowed to remain at Nameag and that they be placed under English jurisdiction.<sup>416</sup> In the declaration, Winthrop did not dwell on Uncas’s injustices against the Pequots, nor did he bother to directly challenge Mason’s charges against him. Instead, Winthrop focused on the *benefits* that placing the Nameag Pequots under English protection would provide Connecticut. The benefits would come in the form of information, labor, and new converts to Puritan Christianity.<sup>417</sup>

Winthrop Jr. argued that allying Cassacinamon’s community with the settlers at Pequot Plantation increased the Commissioners’ potential for “the discovery of any particular iniuries to the psons cattle or other goods of the English especially the small plantation at Pequott, and to the discovery of any trecherous plotts or whatever dangerous designs or preiuditiall in any kind to the English eyther from Narragansett, or mohegans,

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<sup>415</sup>St. Jean, “Inventing Guardianship: The Mohegan Indians and their “Protectors,” 370.

<sup>416</sup>“Mr. Winthrop’s Declaration, 1649,” *Acts*, II: 419; “John Winthrop, Jr. to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, July 1649,” *WP*, 5: 354.

<sup>417</sup>*Ibid.*

or other indians.” Not only would the Pequots serve as informants, they would be “affording their labors and help for hire, or principally in attending to any dispensations of such light of the Glorious Gospel, which it may please the Lord in his good time to send amongst them.”<sup>418</sup> Though focused on political alliances and acquiring territory, the Commissioners also wished to promote Protestant Christianity to the Native peoples they encountered.<sup>419</sup> Winthrop not only appealed to the Commissioners’ political sensibilities, he also courted their heritage as Englishmen as well. As Englishmen, the Commissioners believed they had reached a high level of civilization and justice. Winthrop played upon that heritage when he asked that the Commissioners allow Cassacinamon’s group to “live under the shadow of the English Justice free from tyranny & oppression.”<sup>420</sup>

The 1649 declaration is important for a number of reasons. First, unlike the previous petitions of 1646 and 1647, Cassacinamon did not endorse the document with his name or signatory mark.<sup>421</sup> This exclusion of Cassacinamon is odd, considering how prominent he was in all previous legal (and extra-legal) attempts to persuade the Commissioners to intervene on behalf of the Pequots. When compared to those earlier petitions, the 1649 petition possessed a noticeable difference in language and tone. Winthrop Jr. had long argued that having the Nameag Pequots affiliated with the English

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<sup>418</sup>Ibid.

<sup>419</sup>Michael Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 112.

<sup>420</sup>“Mr. Winthrop’s Declaration, 1649,” *Acts*, II: 419.

<sup>421</sup>“September 1646,” *Acts* I: 73-74”; “The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103; “Mr. Winthrop’s Declaration, 1649,” *Acts*, II: 419.

would be advantageous to the English.<sup>422</sup> However, in the previous petitions, Cassacinamon and Winthrop Jr. argued that the Nameag Pequots should be freed because Uncas violated his treaty agreements with the English and the reciprocal relationships that Native leaders maintained with their tributaries. Those violations caused the Nameag Pequots to unduly suffer, so Cassacinamon, on behalf of the Nameag Pequots, asked for English help in obtaining redress. The 1649 declaration presented an entirely English-dominated narrative. Winthrop argued that the Commissioners should place the Nameag Pequots under English authority *solely* for the benefits that such a relationship would provide the English.<sup>423</sup> If the Commissioners could not be swayed by calls to fairness, perhaps they would respond to a proposal based entirely on English self-interest. If that interpretation is true, it explains the exclusion of Cassacinamon from the document; such an action presented the Nameag community as beholden to the English and Winthrop Jr., and therefore easier to control.

Winthrop Jr. also emphasized that the size of the Nameag community benefitted the English. He referred to Nameag as “those few Pequots wch did lately live neere the English plantation,” downplaying the number of Pequots living there. He also said that even if Nameag became affiliated with the English, Uncas would still have “many hundreds” of Natives in his Mohegan confederation. While the Pequots were not as numerous as they had been before the 1637, and the Mohegans and Narragansetts remained more populous, it was disingenuous on Winthrop Jr.’s part to downplay the size

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<sup>422</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr. to Thomas Peters, September 3, 1646,” *WP*, 5: 101; “Petition of the Inhabitants of New London to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, September 15, 1646,” *WP*, 5: 111-112.

<sup>423</sup>“September 1646,” *Acts* I: 73-74”; “The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103.



of the Nameag community. In 1646, Nameag had seventy-two men and eight boys listed in the official count done by the English. If women and girls are included in these estimates, as well as the Pequots who moved to the community over the years, the Pequot population potentially reached some three hundred fifty to five hundred people by the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>424</sup> There were more than just a “few” Pequots at Nameag. Winthrop Jr. observed that “whereas Uncus hath the sole militia of all the other Pequotts, w<sup>ch</sup> are w<sup>th</sup> him being many hundreds, and the Niantiques also,” if the Nameag Pequots were placed under English jurisdiction, Uncas “might not have the militia of these few w<sup>th</sup>out the consent of the English or of them whom the commissioners please to appoint.”<sup>425</sup> If the Commissioners agreed with Winthrop’s proposal, Uncas would still have many warriors at his disposal, certainly a benefit if fighting broke out with the Narragansetts, but the English would also have some dependable Natives on their side.

Two other events convinced the Commissioners to grant serious consideration to the Pequots’ request. In July of 1649, the same month he composed his declaration to the Commissioners, John Winthrop Jr. received several overtures to move to New Netherlands; they offered him the opportunity to bring the Nameag community (English and Pequot) with him to settle in the colony, possibly on Long Island.<sup>426</sup> These personal

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<sup>424</sup>“List of the Pequot Indians at Pequot Plantation about the Time of the Settlement 1646,” Eva Butler MSS, Indians and Colonial Research Center, Mystic, CT; Williams, *Complete Writings*, 6:67; Kevin A. McBride, “The Historical Archaeology of the Mashantucket Pequots, 1637-1900,” in *The Pequots of Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, edited by Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 105; Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut: From the First Survey of the Coast in 1612 to 1860* (New London, CT: 1895), 45, 51-52; Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 106-108. The Nameag Pequots would later become the Mashantucket Pequots, due to the success of Cassacinamon’s strategy.

<sup>425</sup>“Mr. Winthrop’s Declaration, July 1649,” *Acts*, II: 419.

<sup>426</sup>“George Baxter to John Winthrop, Jr., July 15, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 355; “William Hallett to John Winthrop, Jr., July 16, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 355-356; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 137; Woodward, *Prospero’s*

invitations continued throughout July and August of 1649, and included offers to bring “those Indians that liued under yow will come along with yow, and under your gouernment, yow shall haue sufficient to accommodate them or any number of families yow shall thinke meete,” suggest that he seriously.<sup>427</sup> While the Commissioners may have been happy to be rid of the Pequots, the thought of losing the English settlers at Winthrop’s plantation gave them pause.

The situation intensified in August of 1649, when word reached the Commissioners that a Mohegan war party had once again assaulted a Pequot settlement near Nameag. In the attack, an old Pequot woman was killed, and as the six Mohegans fled, the pursuing Pequots managed to kill one of the Mohegan captains.<sup>428</sup> The village the Mohegans attacked belonged to a group of Pawcatuck Pequots who had settled with Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots.<sup>429</sup> For his part, Uncas seems to have honored the letter of the 1647 Commissioners’ ruling: he did not attack any of Cassacinamon’s Pequots at Nameag, only ones affiliated with Ninigret and the Narragansetts.<sup>430</sup> Still, this attack threatened to ignite open war between the Mohegans and Narragansetts. Roger

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*America*, 153. According to Woodward, by the 1650s, John Winthrop Jr.’s reputation as a skilled and influential individual had grown so wide he received offers from Providence, New Haven, Hartford, and New Amsterdam to relocate his plantation.

<sup>427</sup>“William Hallett to John Winthrop, Jr., July 16, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 355-356.

<sup>428</sup>“Roger Williams to John Winthrop, Jr., August 1649,” *WP*, 5: 359-360; “John Winthrop, Jr. to [John Haynes], August 28, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 360-361; “To John Winthrop, Jr., and John Mason, 26 August 1649,” *RWC*, I: 292-293.

<sup>429</sup>“The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok,” July 1647, *Acts*, I: 97, 100-103. Even though the Pawcatuck villagers were technically Narragansett tributaries per the Hartford Treaty, they had received permission to settle near Cassacinamon. This attests to Cassacinamon’s power and draw as Pequot sachem, the connections between the Pequots themselves, and the use of settelement patterns as a political strategy.

<sup>430</sup>*Ibid.*, 102-103.

Williams convinced the Narragansetts to hold back, telling them that “the Monhiggins have now kild but an old woman,” while the Pawcatuck Pequots “have kild a Captaine.” This seemed to satisfy most of the Narragansetts, but they still demanded that Connecticut authorities do something “to stoppe Uncus his proceedings in this kind to provoke them to warre, which they are not willing to.” “If such continuall iniuries” were not stopped, the Narragansetts warned that the Mohegans would “force them to it.”<sup>431</sup>

These incidents in the summer of 1649 forced the Commissioners to take action, and they drafted a compromise agreement. The Commissioners granted Cassacinamon’s group, all those Pequots who “pfessing a Redy willingness to herken to the Comissioners advise...som fit place by the Concent of Conectacot.” This settlement was to be in “no ways Preiuditiall to the Towne allredy begune at Nameoke,” but once that site was decided upon, the Pequots would have “libbertie for the present to settle & plant.” However, while Cassacinamon and the Pequots received permission to create their own settlement, the Commissioners did not place the Pequots under direct English jurisdiction. The Commissioners ruled that Cassacinamon and the Pequots currently at Nameag remained officially tied to the Mohegans, “thay owneing Uncas as their Sachem & in all things Carring themselves as his subjects.”<sup>432</sup> Uncas, wishing to keep his English allies at his side should the Narragansetts decide upon retaliation, was forced to accept the deal. The 1649 compromise gave Cassacinamon and the Pequots permission to live in their own settlement, although they still had to recognize Uncas as their grand sachem and give him tribute payments. However, even this partial victory

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<sup>431</sup>“To John Winthrop, Jr., and John Mason, 26 August 1649,” *RWC*, I: 292-293; “John Winthrop, Jr., to [John Haynes], August 28, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 360.

<sup>432</sup>“July 1649,” *Acts*, I: 146.

provided Cassacinamon with a tremendous leap forward towards achieving his goal. In 1648, the Pequots had been ordered to return to Uncas; a year later, they obtained permission to live on their own, albeit close to the English of Pequot Plantation. More importantly, Winthrop could not have made this compromise without the cooperation of Cassacinamon. Beginning in the fall of 1649, Cassacinamon and the Pequots sent the first round of petitions asking for the land they were promised.<sup>433</sup> They were one step closer towards returning home.

### III

Despite the favorable ruling from the Commissioners, the Pequots' fight was not yet over. Cassacinamon and Nameag still encountered resistance from the English who were slow to act on setting aside the land promised for the new settlement. This hesitation on the part of the Connecticut colonial government did not deter Cassacinamon, Winthrop Jr., or the Pequots. In October 1649, the English settlers of Pequot Plantation, now called New London, wrote to the new Connecticut governor Edward Hopkins, asking for his advice. The letter, endorsed by John Winthrop Jr., informed the governor that "the Indians that formerly lived here are come today to desire a place to be appointed for them according to the order of the Commissioners and their promise to them." However, even though the New London townspeople knew that "there was such an order from the commissioners," and that Hopkins himself "did nominate 3 of our towne to looke out, and appoint the place which they being informed of by those Indians that were present when it was agreed upon," they still had not carried out the order. "Yet because we have noe expresse direction from your selfe," the letter stated

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<sup>433</sup>“The Inhabitants of New London to Edward Hopkins, October 12, 1649,” *WP*, 5: 374.

that the townspeople, “doe not meddle in that matter.” They hoped that Governor Hopkins would be “pleased to send speedy order about it.” If the governor and Connecticut officials continued to drag their feet on the matter, New London feared that “it will put them [the Pequots] upon such distractions as may prove very inconvenient to them and to our selues.”<sup>434</sup>

It was apparent to Winthrop Jr. and the headmen of New London that until Cassacinamon and the Pequots received what they were promised, they would pressure colonial officials until they delivered on their ruling. This proved to be an accurate assessment. John Haynes wrote to John Winthrop Jr., informing him that Cassacinamon personally traveled to the governor’s office, “and desireds in the behalilfe of himselfe and somme others sitt downe with him that they may have A convenient place assignned them wher the English shall appoint.” Cassacinamon assured Connecticut officials that “they will attend Order in it,” but as for the sake of the Pequot community, he requested “that they may have this planting time now to come parte of the ould broke upp ground, to use, for this year until they can fitt the other place and ground for use.”<sup>435</sup>

As the months passed, the Pequots pressed forward with their claims for a new settlement. But by September of 1650 — a full year after the agreement — Cassacinamon and the Pequots grew anxious. The leading townspeople of New London noted “that the Pequot Indians doe often complain to mr. W[inthrop]: that some of the English thretne to send them away to the Sugar Country.”<sup>436</sup> While John Winthrop Jr.

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<sup>434</sup>Ibid.

<sup>435</sup>“John Haynes to John Winthrop, Jr., 27 January 1649[50],” *WP*, 6: 13.

<sup>436</sup>“New London Town Grants to John Winthrop, Jr., [September 1, 1650?],” *WP*, 6: 63.

supported Cassacinamon and the Pequots, if that passage is to be believed, not all of the residents in New London shared his view. After the chaos that had surrounded Nameag/New London over the years, combined with the biased views many English colonists held towards indigenous peoples and any lingering fears about the Pequots, it is not surprising that some English settlers felt negatively towards the Pequots. After the Pequot War many Pequots had been sold into West Indian slavery, so the specter of forced bondage remained a powerful threat. While intimidating, as long as Winthrop Jr. carried considerable authority and Cassacinamon counted him as a powerful ally, it was doubtful that any of the Pequots would be sold into slavery in 1650.

The document reaffirmed the Pequots' reliance on Winthrop Jr.'s support, as "they Expressing themselves to be [*afraid*] dissatisfied Unless they may have the [*Countenance*] friendship and protection of mr. W[inthrop]." <sup>437</sup> While Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots acted on their own — and frequently did so — this passage illustrates (perhaps in a melodramatic fashion) that the Pequots recognized the value of Winthrop Jr.'s support. They had learned the lesson of the Pequot War: to survive in the Anglo-Algonquian world, they needed Algonquian *and* English allies. As the Englishman that Cassacinamon and the Nameag Pequots trusted the most, the Nameag community was adamant that the younger Winthrop be involved in the new land deal. The Pequots "desired that mr. W: would Give them Liberty to Live and plant on his Land." After several negotiations between Cassacinamon and the Pequots, New London, and Winthrop Jr., the townspeople decided, upon "the advise and consent of Capt. Mason," to work out a deal. The Pequots received "the land at Newayunck Neck

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<sup>437</sup>Ibid; "Agreement of New London with the Pequot Indians, November 18, 1651," *WP*, 6: 147. Noank was also referred to as "Noiancke" and "Newayunck" in various records.

[Noank],” where they “may Live and plant and fish at said Newayunck [Noank].” Politically and personally, this was a clear victory for Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and for Winthrop Jr. Winthrop further cemented his reputation as a political broker, and achieved his greatest triumph as the Pequots’ advocate. However, Winthrop was motivated by more than altruism or personal ties to Cassacinamon. Winthrop was given “the fee Simple of said Land,” while use of “the meadow on said Neck” was given to Mr. John Gallup, a local townsmen.<sup>438</sup>

This was the greatest achievement Cassacinamon and the Pequots experienced since the Pequot War. With this agreement, Cassacinamon saw the creation of a new settlement, and the Pequots gained official sanction to live on their own. Once the Commissioners of the United Colonies, Connecticut officials, and the New London headmen agreed to grant this new land to the Pequots, the community’s transition to Noank happened in a rapid manner in 1650. The Pequot community, now called the Noank Pequots, relocated to the new settlement by the end of 1650. Noank was a small, five hundred acre, coastal reservation located on a peninsula “on the west shore of Mystic Harbor,” a spot south-southwest of present-day Mystic, CT. Further, the new settlement was five to six miles east of New London, a reasonable distance from the English settlement should they require the services of the Pequots, or should the Pequots seek employment opportunities. However, unlike their former village at Nameag, Noank was a coastal settlement lying within the former Pequot territory.<sup>439</sup> This one act, the

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<sup>438</sup>Ibid.

<sup>439</sup>“New London Town Grants to John Winthrop, Jr., [September 1, 1650?],” *WP*, 6: 63; Agreement of New London with the Pequot Indians, November 18, 1651,” *WP*, 6: 147; McBride, “Legacy,” 86.

culmination of years of hard work by Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and Winthrop Jr., meant that several hundred Pequots (now identified by their Noank reservation) finally returned to their homeland. This was a direct reversal of the 1638 Treaty of Hartford, which stated that the surviving Pequots “were not to live in their ancient country, nor to be called by their ancient name, but to become Narragansetts and Mohegans.”<sup>440</sup> The treaty provision concerned with their name had never been enforced, and while the Commissioners ruled that Cassacinamon and the Noank Pequots were, for the time being, still politically affiliated with Uncas, the move to Noank invalidated the heart of the 1638 treaty. Cassacinamon and the Pequots had come home.

While Cassacinamon and the Noank Pequots celebrated their victory, some provisions foreshadowed later attempts by the English to assert direct control over the community. Broader English support for a separate Pequot community occurred as a result of the continuing crisis between Uncas and Ninigret, because Winthrop Jr. and Cassacinamon convinced the English that the Pequots would be more “dependable” Indians than the other two confederations. The English agreed, but they still looked for ways to protect and dominate their “investment.” As the Pequots moved to Noank, the Commissioners of the United Colonies sent a declaration to Uncas, Ninigret, Wequashcook, “and the other Sachems to whom they belong as their other men in all other respects doe or ought to doe.” While the Commissioners reaffirmed that the Noank Pequots still held their political affiliation to those Native sachems, the Noank community was “not [to] be oppressed but to enjoy equall priviledges with the rest in

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<sup>440</sup>Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, 338; John W. DeForest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut-From the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, CT: WM. Jas. Hmaersley, 1851; reprint, Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1964), 160.



hunting and other wayes.”<sup>441</sup> While the Pequots had long demonstrated their ability to hunt anywhere they pleased despite whatever “orders” were present, and Cassacinamon was probably satisfied with the English support in this matter, this declaration was another step toward English dominance in the Anglo-Indian New England frontier. Further, the English attempted to assert dominance in their relationship with the Noank Pequots as well.<sup>442</sup>

On November 18, 1651, a formal agreement between the Noank Pequots and the town of New London ordered “that such part of the Land...which thy shall make use of to plant, the saide Indians shall fence the same and what damage shall come to any of there Corne by any English Cattle, or hogs they shall beare the damage of it themselves.” The agreement went on to say that the Pequots “shall make good any hurt that shall be done to any English Cattle or hogs by themselves or any other Indians that shall live amongst them.”<sup>443</sup> As time went on, Cassacinamon and the Pequots demonstrated their unwillingness to abide by this agreement — Cassacinamon filed several lawsuits over the years seeking compensation for damages done by English livestock, or appealed fines that were levied against Pequots for retaliating against the animals.<sup>444</sup> These steps demonstrated some of the ways the Pequots exerted their own independence, even when

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<sup>441</sup>“Declaration of the Commissioners of the United Colonies, September 12, 1651,” *WP*, 6: 140.

<sup>442</sup>“Agreement of New London with the Pequot Indians, November 18, 1651,” *WP*, 6: 147.

<sup>443</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>444</sup>“September 1658,” *Acts*, II: 199, 205; “September 1659,” *Acts*, II: 225-227; “September 1663,” *Acts*, II: 298. These kinds of suits happened throughout Cassacinamon’s lifetime as leader of the Pequots. For more information on the devastation and environmental changes caused by the introduction of livestock animals to the environment of New England, see Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

directly affiliated with the English. They continued to file petitions, lawsuits, and complaints whenever they believed they were treated unfairly. Further, Cassacinamon and the Pequots realized that when dealing with the English over issues of land, it was in their best interest to have written documents to back up their claims. The Pequots requested and received a copy of the General Court's order allowing them to resettle in Noank in 1650, and they received similar copies of important documents after that.<sup>445</sup> These legal actions, paired with Cassacinamon's close alliance with John Winthrop Jr., shielded the Pequots from the more extreme efforts of the English to exert authority over the Pequots, at least while they lived.

As the crisis between Uncas and Ninigret continued, the Noank Pequots pressed their advantage. Cassacinamon continued to act as an intermediary and information broker, while the Pequots themselves served as a "buffer" between the English colonists and other Native groups. The stalemate continued until the English, hearing rumors (some brought to them by Cassacinamon) that Ninigret sought an alliance with the Dutch, led the English to openly support Uncas in his dispute with Ninigret. This response tipped the balance of power, at least temporarily, towards the Mohegans and the English, but Cassacinamon made certain that the Pequots benefited. In 1654, the Narragansetts had Wequashcook's Pawcatuck Pequots removed from their confederation. The Pawcatuck Pequots became English tributaries.<sup>446</sup> The same year, Cassacinamon filed yet another petition to completely remove the Noank Pequots from Mohegan jurisdiction.

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<sup>445</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of My People & My Self," 117.

<sup>446</sup>"Simon Willard to John Winthrop, Jr., with Enclosures, 1654," *WP*, 6: 458; "Agreement of Captive Pequot Indians, Pauquatuck, 16.8.1654," *WP*, 6: 459-462; "Agreement of Ninigret, 18.8.1654," *WP*, 6: 463-464; "Order for Resettling the Pequots, with Enclosure, October 23, 1654," *WP*, 6: 465-466; "Pequots Submitting Themselves to English Rule, October 23, 1654," *WP*, 6: 467.

In recognition of the support Cassacinamon and the Noank Pequots provided the English in the struggle against Ninigret, the Noank Pequots were officially placed under English jurisdiction as well. The Commissioners ruled that the Noank Pequots were “freed from Subjection to any Indian Sachem...and taken under the protection of the English.” Cassacinamon received the formal English title of governor of the community, which reinforced the Native credentials that he already possessed.<sup>447</sup>

While the Pequots (Noank and Pawcatuck) had removed themselves from the Mohegan and Narragansett confederations, they still were not completely independent, but semi-autonomous. And despite Cassacinamon’s best efforts, the entire Pawcatuck Pequot group was denied resettlement at Noank, thwarting his attempt at uniting all of the Pequots under his authority.<sup>448</sup> Two Pequot reservations were officially created: Noank led by Cassacinamon, and Pawcatuck led by Wequashcook. However, while denied official political reunification, the two groups maintained constant contact with one another through the informal kinship networks.

Uncas protested this decision, and petitioned the United Colonies for their help in restoring the Pequots to him as his tributaries. They encouraged the tributaries that left Uncas and joined Cassacinamon “to returne and those with him to continew still at Mohegene,” but few of the Pequots that left did so. In one extreme example of this trend, Uncas paid the Commissioners four fathoms of wampum “for one of his Indians Pequots now resideing with Robin incase hee will returne backe to Monhegene.” However, when it became clear this Pequot (like so many others) preferred Cassacinamon’s leadership, he

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<sup>447</sup> “September 1654,” *Acts*, II: 134; “September 1655,” *Acts*, II: 142; McBride, “Legacy,” 82.

<sup>448</sup>“Order for Resettling the Pequots, with Enclosure, October 23, 1654,” *WP*, 6: 465.

asked the Commissioners to return the wampum in the event the Pequot did not return to him. The power dynamics on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier had clearly shifted, and Cassacinamon and the Pequots benefited from that shift. In fact, they played a crucial part in facilitating that new dynamic. All the Commissioners could do was mitigate the damage to Uncas; they ordered Cassacinamon to stay off Mohegan lands, and keep the Pequot hunting and fishing parties on the east side of the Thames River. In February 1657, Uncas turned to Connecticut officials for aid; if the Commissioners would not help him, perhaps his Connecticut allies could. However, the Mohegan grand sachem found no recourse with Connecticut officials either. They ruled that Cassacinamon could “keep the Mohegins or others of Uncasses men that are with him,” unless “Uncas desires them & they desitre themselves to goe to Uncas.” It was an empty ruling however, as few Pequots desired to return. Cassacinamon had defeated the Mohegan grand sachem.<sup>449</sup>

Cassacinamon and the Noank Pequots were now officially under the direct jurisdiction of the English, and had to pay the English the post-war wampum tribute they formerly gave the Mohegans. However, the Noank Pequots seemed more accepting of this relationship with the English than their status under Uncas and the Mohegans. While the English engaged in the horrific act of burning Mystic Fort, Uncas and the Pequots engaged in a complicated and acrimonious relationship before that war began. Once the surviving Pequots were absorbed into the Mohegan confederation, Uncas violated the reciprocal relationship that Native sachems maintained with their people and tributaries. Seen in this light, it is easier to understand why Cassacinamon and the Pequots sought outside options to achieve their goals, and why the English proved such a powerful ally.

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<sup>449</sup>*Acts*, II: 142-143; *CR*, 1: 292-293; Oberg, *Uncas*, 140.

The alliance between Cassacinamon and John Winthrop Jr. was a mutually beneficial one, one that the Pequots themselves maintained and which protected them from the more egregious examples of English power; this may account for their acceptance of their new status.<sup>450</sup>

Once at Noank, Cassacinamon launched his next stage in his fight for his faction of Pequots. In less than a decade, the five-hundred-acre Noank reservation proved inadequate to meet the needs of the Pequots. In 1658, Cassacinamon petitioned the Commissioners of the United Colonies for more reservation land, arguing that Noank's soils were exhausted and that there was no firewood available.<sup>451</sup> The Commissioners ruled that "Cashasinnimon and his Comapnie shall haue a fit proportion of land allowed them att Wawarramoreke neare the pat that leads from misticke Riuer to Moheage about fiue or six miles from the mouth of Misticke River." They then instructed the Connecticut government to carry this order out, and "appoint as soon as may bee some meet psons to lay out and bound the said lands for them."<sup>452</sup> It took eight more years of negotiations and petitions to acquire this additional land, but in 1666, the two-thousand-acre Mashantucket reservation was granted to Cassacinamon and the Pequots by the Connecticut colony. Mashantucket, like Noank, lay within the Pequots' traditional territory. It was about ten miles inland from Noank and had served as a Pequot hunting ground before the 1637 war. It had also served as a refuge for the Pequots during the war; the cedar swamp located at the center of Mashantucket was known as Ohomowauke

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<sup>450</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 88, 97-99, 103-105, 136-137

<sup>451</sup>McBride, "Legacy," 82.

<sup>452</sup>"September 1658," *Acts*, II: 199.

(“owl’s nest”) and Cuppacommock (“refuge or hiding place”). Mashantucket became a refuge once again for the Pequots. With both Noank and Mashantucket at their disposal, Cassacinamon and the Pequots recreated their seasonal subsistence patterns, traveling between the coast and inland to utilize the resources of both.<sup>453</sup>

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By mid-century, Cassacinamon and one major faction of Pequots had returned to their traditional homeland on their reservation at Noank, and by 1666 they had regained Mashantucket as well. The once-feared nation, forbidden in 1638 to claim even their own name, had achieved one of the few net gains in reservation lands in colonial New England. In the process, Cassacinamon’s community assumed a new title, that of the Noank/Mashantucket Pequots. Their success depended on several important factors. While forced to accommodate English legal methods and demands, Cassacinamon and the Pequots operated within a Native political context, and their actions can only be understood by keeping this in mind. The Pequots, as a community, worked to preserve their own sense of identity. From 1648 to 1666, Pequots congregated together, despite attempts by the Mohegans, Narragansetts and English to keep them apart — first at Nameag, then at Noank and Mashantucket. These settlements offered the Pequots the chance to reunite with kin and live in their own communities. While colonial authorities prevented the Noank/Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots from achieving complete reunification, specifically denying them the right to live together on the same reservation, the two groups maintained their connections with one another in other ways. Family and

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<sup>453</sup>Kevin A. McBride, “‘Ancient and Crazie’: Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period,” in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present* (Boston: Boston University and The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings, 1991), 63, 65-67.

kin moved back and forth between reservations, and the two groups continued to coordinate their activities (such as hunting) as they had managed in the 1640s and 1650s.

The Nameag/Noank/Mashantucket Pequots had also agitated for their independence from Uncas by using direct methods of civil and uncivil disobedience. They operated within “official” legal channels when they endorsed the petitions of the late 1640s brought by their leader to the Commissioners of the United Colonies. These petitions outlined just how Uncas had failed to meet his reciprocal obligations to them, which they felt justified their attempts to be freed from his authority. The Pequots also endorsed complaints against English colonists who did not move fast enough to secure them the new lands that they were promised. The Pequots also engaged in “extra-legal” methods. Their continued hunts in the disputed territorial zones; the seizure and destruction of property belonging to other Natives (namely Mohegans) that, in their view, violated their space; and their physical resistance to attempts by Uncas to force Pequot compliance all played a part in keeping the Pequot issue at the forefront of the Anglo-Algonquian frontier of New England. In these ways, the Nameag/Noank/Mashantucket Pequot community itself assumed an active role in agitating for their freedom from Uncas and in claiming their new reservations.

The important work of the Pequot community was matched only by the efforts of Robin Cassacinamon and his English ally, John Winthrop Jr. Cassacinamon proved that he deserved the position of sachem, by directing the campaigns of the Pequot community. He secured for himself and the Pequots a powerful ally in John Winthrop Jr., who argued their case in the halls of New England colonial government, even when other Native

leaders and Englishmen (including his own family) dismissed it as a futile effort. Cassacinamon coordinated the unauthorized hunts and the resistance to Uncas's 1648 raid at Nameag. He personally filed grievances and petitions with the Commissioners of the United Colonies and with Connecticut governors to persuade them to release the Pequots from their subjugation to Uncas. He encouraged community fission and reconstitution as a way to strengthen his own power base, by drawing Pequots to him and away from other Native leaders like Uncas. And in the case of Wequashcook, Cassacinamon drew on his available resources to thwart an internal challenge to his authority among the Pequots. But it was perhaps Cassacinamon's skills as an intermediary and interpreter that most benefited the Pequots in their struggle. This ability to control and manipulate information placed Cassacinamon at the vanguard of the regional contest between the two major Native political powers in the southern New England. His expertise cast himself as an indispensable asset to the English. By engaging in these actions, Robin Cassacinamon and the Pequots achieved their goal of breaking away from Uncas and returning to their own territory. While the trade-off involved directly affiliating themselves with the English, the primary goal had been met: separation from Uncas and a return to their traditional homelands, secure in their own settlements, and affiliation with a powerful ally of their own choosing. The Pequots had come home.

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## **Chapter 5: “Wampum was like the grass...but if men be once kild they will live noe more” - Cassacinamon and Regional Politics**

By the 1650s, Robin Cassacinamon’s use of advantageous political alliances, and his skills as an interpreter and information broker, secured his place within the diplomatic network of the southern New England Anglo-Indian frontier. These successes proved his effectiveness as a sachem, and ensured a continual flow of Pequots to his community and his sphere of influence.<sup>454</sup> As sachem, Cassacinamon utilized colonial legal proceedings in his ongoing fight for the Pequots, and became a fixture in the Connecticut courts as both the plaintiff and the defendant. He provided expert testimony in land cases and boundary disputes concerning the Pequots and other Native peoples. The Mashantucket Pequots further integrated into the economy and social structure of Connecticut, adding their labor to the workforce of the growing colony. The acquisition of the Noank and Mashantucket reservations meant that Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots experienced a net gain of territory, a rare event on the New England Anglo-Algonquian frontier.<sup>455</sup>

But while Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots ensured their own survival, the social and political reality of southern New England continued to change. In the 1660s and early 1670s, the interconnected society that existed between the colonials and the Algonquians shifted into permanent state of colonial dominance. That

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<sup>454</sup>For a more in depth view of seventeenth-century southern New England Algonquian political structures, see Eric Spencer Johnson, ““Some By Flatteries and Others By Threatenings”: Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England,” PhD dissertation, Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993. In his work, Johnson examines several political strategies and processes that Native leaders in seventeenth-century southern New England engaged in “through which political authority was acquired, legitimized, and/or resisted, including ideology, political alliance, marriage and kinship, coercion, trade, settlement pattern, and manipulation of material culture and material symbols.”

<sup>455</sup>I will refer to Cassacinamon’s Pequot community as the Mashantucket Pequots. It is the Mashantucket reservation that the tribe currently lives on, and the one they have retained since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

interdependence had created the environment essential to Cassacinamon's plans; it provided the conditions which enabled the Pequots to return to their traditional homelands. However, in the new political reality, only Cassacinamon's skill and the links forged by the Mashantucket Pequots could save them as the world changed again.

## I

As historian Neal Salisbury has argued, for several decades after the Pequot War a distinct (yet uneasy) interdependent socio-economic landscape flourished well into the 1660s.<sup>456</sup> The Algonquians of southern New England lacked the complete political autonomy they had possessed before Europeans arrived, but they still controlled enough land to provide for their subsistence needs, at the same time they engaged in reciprocal relationships with other Natives and the English. Southern Algonquians traded furs, engaged in land transactions, sold their services and labor, and purchased European manufactured goods. For their part, the English required what the Natives offered. Their voracious hunger for land was ever-present, but the colonials also depended on the services of Natives as hunters, interpreters, laborers, and consumers. Separated from Oliver Cromwell's Puritan Commonwealth in England, the colonials relied on Native wampum as a currency to enact these transactions.<sup>457</sup> Algonquians and colonials needed one another.

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<sup>456</sup>Neal Salisbury, "Indians and Colonists in Southern New England after the Pequot War: An Uneasy Balance," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, eds. Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 82.

<sup>457</sup>This interdependence correlated directly to the intensity of competition for resources (namely land), and a certain level of social segregation existed; however, these communities remained connected in important economic and political ways. For a closer examination of this interdependent system, see the following works. Salisbury, "Indians and Colonists in Southern New England," 82-83, 94; Lynn Ceci,

Cassacinamon and the Pequots had participated in this interdependent system, but their status forced them to make accommodations avoided by other more powerful groups like the Mohegans. Cassacinamon successfully exploited that “outsider” status to secure his people’s freedom from the Mohegans, but the Pequots had also accrued more experience navigating the colonists’ political, social, and economic world than some of their indigenous neighbors.<sup>458</sup> This working relationship provided Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots (previously known as the Nameag/Noank Pequots) with opportunities to solidify ties with English allies, and granted them another means to support themselves alongside their regular subsistence strategies at Noank and Mashantucket. Pequots hunted for the colonists, traded with them, and worked for them in other ways, such as servants or day laborers. Colonial authorities even set aside funds to train some Natives as apprentices in manual trades like smithing.<sup>459</sup>

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“Native Wampum as a Peripheral Resource in the Seventeenth-Century World-System,” in *The Pequots in Southern New England*, 60-63; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 105-109, 307-315; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 134; Salisbury, “Indians and Colonists after the Pequots War,” 85-86. See also J.M. Sosin, *English America and the Restoration Monarchy of Charles II: Transatlantic Politics, Commerce, and Kinship* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 2, 74-76; Stephen Saunders Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of Empire, 1550-1681* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 441; Bernard Bailyn, *New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 54-57, 59-60, 75; Stephen Innes, *Labor in a New Land* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), chapter 2; Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), 234; Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1973), 74-75.

<sup>458</sup>Michael Leroy Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 158.

<sup>459</sup>Since 1645, John Winthrop Jr. had extolled the value of having a group of Natives closely allied to the English as both a defensive barrier against more “wild” Natives, and as potential laborers to be hired out by English colonists. “September 1662,” Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England, Volume II, 1653-1679, in *Plymouth Colonial Records*, Vol. X (Boston: William White, 1859; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1968), II: 280 (Hereafter *Acts*); John Winthrop Jr., *Winthrop’s Journal: “History of New England,” 1630-1649*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1908), 2: 520; Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 6: 67; “List of the Pequot Indians at Pequot Plantation about the Time of the Settlement 1646,” Eva Butler MSS, Indians and Colonial Research Center, Mystic, CT (Hereafter ICRC); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians,*

As Pequots worked alongside English colonials, Cassacinamon applied his linguistic and political skills in ways that benefited the Mashantucket Pequots. By the 1650s, he had established himself as a translator and interpreter who worked in a variety of legal venues, as well as within regional diplomatic circles. The English called upon the sachem to participate in legal proceedings between colonials and Native peoples, where he offered testimony in depositions and translated Indian wills.<sup>460</sup> While not as overt a political act as controlling information between competing English and Algonquian polities, this legal work further cemented Cassacinamon's reputation as a reliable and desired resource for the English. Cassacinamon parlayed that reputation into certain protections to himself and his community.<sup>461</sup>

On December 3, 1657, Cassacinamon and the Pequots achieved greater security when John Winthrop Jr. accepted the governorship of the Connecticut colony. Throughout the 1650s, the younger Winthrop's political influence in Connecticut had grown. Winthrop's reputation as a scientist, healer, and economic developer, as well as an Indian negotiator, proved useful to Connecticut colony. He had served as an assistant

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*Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 103; Neal Salisbury, "Toward the Covenant Chain: Iroquois and Southern New England Algonquians, 1637-1684," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors, 1600-1800*, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse, NY: 1987), 66; Kevin A. McBride, "'Ancient and Crazie': Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period," in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present*, ed. Peter Benes, (Boston: Boston University, 1991), 66; Kevin McBride, "Monahntic Fort: The Pequot in King Philip's War," in *Native Forts of the Long Island Sound Area*, edited by Gaynell Stone, vol. 8 of *Readings in Long Island Archaeology & Ethnohistory* (Stony Brook, NY: Suffolk County Archaeological Association and Sheridan Books, 2006), 331-332.

<sup>460</sup>The Deposition of Thomas Minor, Robert Hempstead, and William Nicholls, April 17, 1650," *The Winthrop Papers, Volume 6, 1650-1654*, ed. Malcolm Freiberg (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), 6: 34 (Hereafter *WP*); "Confirmation by Massashawat of Iumse's Deed to John Winthrop, Jr., November 25, 1653," *WP*, 6: 349.

<sup>461</sup>For the benefits of Native leaders controlling information as intermediaries/interpreters, see Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 108.

in the Connecticut government from 1651 to 1656. His extensive network of connections throughout New England and England proper made him an attractive prospect to several colonies. Hartford and New Haven each solicited his favor, and he seriously considered relocating to New Haven. On May 21, 1657, Connecticut elected Winthrop governor in absentia; he considered the offer for six months before he accepted. The following year, Winthrop served as deputy governor, but from 1659 until his death in 1676, Winthrop held the office of Connecticut governor.<sup>462</sup> As Cassacinamon's ally did well for himself, the sachem shared in those benefits.

The Mashantucket Pequots supported Cassacinamon as sachem, and the English backed his leadership as well when they bestowed upon him the official title of "governor." Since the Pequots lay under English legal jurisdiction, the English claimed the authority to choose their principal officers.<sup>463</sup> By claiming this right, Connecticut officials attempted to exert their influence over the Pequots. However, the repeated selection of Cassacinamon over any other Pequots raised questions as to the effectiveness of the tactic. While Cassacinamon helped the English, he often argued with Connecticut officials over issues of tribute and land rights.<sup>464</sup> The sachem/governor walked a political tightrope: meeting his obligations to his own people, while ensuring at least their minimal cooperation with the English. Perhaps the Connecticut General Court found it easier to cooperate with the Pequots on this matter of leadership. Governor John

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<sup>462</sup>Robert C. Black III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (New York: 1966); Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, chapter 3-8; Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010, for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia), 153, 156.

<sup>463</sup>"September 1664," *Acts*, II: 319.

<sup>464</sup>"September 1659," *Acts*, II: 225-228; "September 1662," *Acts*, II: 284-286.

Winthrop Jr. was a powerful ally, but he could not protect Cassacinamon all the time; if Cassacinamon pushed the English too far, or alienated the Pequots too much, he risked losing his position. However, Cassacinamon's value to the English was clear by this time, so they could not arbitrarily toss him aside.

Cassacinamon personally benefited from this recognition,<sup>465</sup> and it served as a reminder that Cassacinamon drew upon powerful reserves of support; he possessed the strongest allies over everyone else in the community. While he was responsible for turning a wampum tribute over to the Commissioners of the United Colonies, as sachem Cassacinamon also received a share of tribute from the Mashantucket Pequot community. The Commissioners ordered that all Native males "over the age of sixteen were required to support their principal officers by paying an annual stipend of five shillings." In this respect, the relationship between the Pequots and the English was similar to the relationships within Native confederations, where community leaders engaged in a system of tribute and reciprocity with those inside their sphere of influence.<sup>466</sup>

The Pequots supported Cassacinamon with tribute, but he also received gifts from colonial officials who hoped to carry favor with him. Fine coats were common gifts bestowed to Native leaders. Cassacinamon received many such coats from government and religious organizations, as the Connecticut General Court and missionaries each

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<sup>465</sup>"September 1655," *Acts*, II: 42; "September 1656," *Acts*, II: 168; "September 1658," *Acts*, II: 199; "September 1662," *Acts*, II: 284- 286; "May 10, 1666," J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), II: 39 (Hereafter *CR*).

<sup>466</sup>*CR*, II: 309; Holm, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 109; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 71-78, 97; Richard Radune, *Pequot Plantation: The Story of an Early Colonial Settlement* (Branford, CT: Research in Time Publications, 2005), 119.

sought his assistance in influencing the Pequots.<sup>467</sup> Along with these standard gifts, Cassacinamon received a rare honor for a Native leader at the time: a horse. This prize reflected his status among both the Pequots and Connecticut officials, especially since colonial governments passed laws that forbade the sale of horses to Natives, as well as other items deemed too “dangerous” for them to possess.<sup>468</sup> Cassacinamon’s receipt of a horse showcased his place among the Pequots and demonstrated the esteemed position he held among the English. He was no mere servant. Cassacinamon functioned as an essential agent on the frontier. Having the governor of Connecticut colony as his close friend and ally shielded Cassacinamon and the Pequots from the most severe abuses of the English. Cassacinamon was also close to other members of the Winthrop family, which only increased his pool of potential allies.<sup>469</sup> His position as sachem secure among the Pequots, and having integrated himself into the socio-political dynamic of the Anglo-Algonquian frontier, Cassacinamon settled into his defined role as leader and diplomat.

However, during the 1660s and 1670s the nature of this arrangement in southern New England changed due to a variety of social, economic, and political factors within New England, and a political shift across the Atlantic. In the spring of 1660, as Cassacinamon agitated for more lands for the Pequots, conflict erupted once again

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<sup>467</sup>“September 1660,” *Acts*, II: 250; “September 1661,” *Acts*, II: 261; “September 1662,” *Acts*, II: 278; Ebenezer A.M. Hazard, *Historical Collections Consisting of State Papers and Other Authentic Documents; Intended as Materials for an History of the United States of America* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 2: 435.

<sup>468</sup>Such laws often accompanied codes that prevented the sale of liquor, weapons, or other “dangerous” items to Native peoples. “October 2, 1656,” *CR*, I: 284; “October 12, 1671,” *CR*, III: 165; “Laws Concerning Indians in the Code of 1672,” *General Laws of Connecticut*, in *Early American Indian Documents: Treaties and Laws, 1607-1789*, Volume XVII, *New England and Middle Atlantic Laws*, eds. Alden T. Vaughan and Deborah A. Rosen, (Washington, DC: University Publications of America, 1979), 275, 288; Oberg, *Uncas*, 159-160.

<sup>469</sup>ICRC, DOC.1672-05-26A; *Winthrop Papers*, in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1849 [10] 3<sup>rd</sup> series: 113 (Hereafter *MHSC*); Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People, 117.

between the Narragansetts and the Mohegans. At the same time, the Niantics launched attacks against Algonquian bands living on Long Island. The Commissioners of the United Colonies ordered Ninigret to pay 500 fathoms of wampum as punishment for the raids and 95 fathoms for leading a Narragansett-Pocumtuck assault against Uncas. The Commissioners demanded payment within four months, and they declared that a sizable portion of Ninigret's lands would be held as security. The Atherton Company, a group of land speculators, lent the Narragansetts the 595 fathoms of wampum in exchange for a six month mortgage. The Atherton Company was led by a man named Humphrey Atherton, who had been Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Massachusetts, and included John Winthrop Jr., who by this time was both Connecticut governor and a Commissioner of the United Colonies.<sup>470</sup>

The extensive political connections of the Atherton Company were not lost on Rhode Island officials. Dr. John Clarke felt that members like Winthrop undermined Rhode Island interests and referred to their actions as “a legalized robbery.”<sup>471</sup> Ninigret was unable to pay back the loan, so by 1662 the Atherton Company laid claim to *all* the Narragansett and Niantic lands. To add to the confusion, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were still mired in a series of boundary and jurisdictional disputes over

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<sup>470</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135; Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 55-56; W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (Hereafter *CSPCS*) (Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1964), V:342; David Pulsifer, ed., *Records of Plymouth Colony* (Hereafter *PCR*) (Boston: William White, 1855-1861), IX: 34-45; Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 195; Richard S. Dunn, “John Winthrop, Jr. and the Narragansett Country,” *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 13 (1956): 72-73.

<sup>471</sup>Elisha R. Potter, Jr., *The Early History of Narragansett* (Providence: Marshall, Brown and Company, 1835), 63 and 161; Clarence Winthrop Bowen, *The Boundary Disputes of Connecticut* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882), 34; Sarah Louise Holmes, ““In Behalf of Myself & My People”: Mashantucket Pequot Strategies in Defense of Their Land Rights,” Ph.D. dissertation, (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, 2007), 50-51.



these same lands. Much of the territory in question lay within Rhode Island, which was not part of the United Colonies, while Connecticut and Massachusetts were members of the English confederation. Winthrop also claimed that the Warwick Patent, which provided the basis of Connecticut's original title, put Connecticut's eastern border at the Narragansett River, which was located within Rhode Island's borders.<sup>472</sup> Ninigret and the Narragansetts refused to turn over their territory to either the Atherton Company or the United Colonies. This aggressive maneuver by the United Colonies signaled a renewed effort by the colonials to control the Anglo-Indian frontier.<sup>473</sup>

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As the land speculators descended upon the Narragansetts, two decades of social and political instability ended in England with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. During the English Civil War (1642-1651), and the subsequent creations of the English Commonwealth (1649-1653) and the Protectorate (1653-1659) by the victorious Puritan faction led by Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan colonies in New England had largely been left to their own devices. Once the Puritan leaders beheaded Charles I in 1649, and proved victorious in the civil war, they removed the great impetus for migration to New

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<sup>472</sup>Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees*, 129, 133; Mary Jeanne Anderson Jones, *Congregational Commonwealth Connecticut, 1636-1662* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 23; Joseph Henry Smith, *Appeals to the Privy Council from the American Plantations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 41, 58; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 254; Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period in American History* (New Haven, CT: 1934-1938), I: 354, 359, 365-368, 402-405; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 44. The patent was initially granted to the Earl of Warwick, Robert Rich, in 1630 by Massachusetts Bay. In 1632, the Earl of Warwick sold some of his interest to English nobles who, in turn, allowed for the original Saybrook group to settle along the Thames River, thus establishing the Connecticut Colony. However, there was some controversy over whether or not the Warwick Patent actually existed. Winthrop Jr. spent some of his trip to England looking for a copy of the original patent. However, all he managed to find was a "deed of conveyance" among the papers of Edward Hopkins. Winthrop and others assumed the original patent was destroyed "in a Fatal Fire at Saybrook fort."

<sup>473</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 55-56; *CSPCS*, V: 342; *PCR*, IX: 34-45; Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 195; Dunn, "John Winthrop, Jr. and the Narragansett Country," *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 13 (1956): 72-73; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 261.

England. Dependent on the so-called “newcomer market” of immigrants, the New England colonies found themselves in economic trouble when that influx of people and funds dwindled. John Winthrop Jr. had spent many years launching business ventures to attract investors and bolster the New England economy, although the colonies exercised a great degree of independent action. During this period, the colonists coined their own currency (and treated the Natives’ wampum as a monetized commodity as well); they violated the English Navigation Acts by trading with the Dutch and the French; they seized control of Maine from its royal proprietors; and, in a move that enraged royalists, they harbored some of the men responsible for the death of Charles I.<sup>474</sup>

In 1660, power was rested from the Puritans and Charles II, son of the executed king, was placed on the throne. The re-instated royal government soon set about drawing the New England colonies back into its orbit. To that end, the king established the Council for Foreign Plantations, so that the New England colonies “should be collected and brought under such an uniforme inspeccon and conduct the Wee may the better apply our royall councelles to theire future regulacon securities and improvement.” Soon after its creation, the Council received several complaints against the United Colonies, detailing their frequent violations of English laws. The crown considered what action to take next.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 134; Stephen Saunders Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 226; “Letter to Lord Chancellor Clarendon, after 19 December 1660,” “Captain Thomas Breedon to Council for Foreign Plantations, 11 March 1660/1661,” and “Maverick to Clarendon, n.d.,” all in “The Clarendon Papers,” *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1869* (New York, 1870), 24, 17-18, 33-34; For a closer examination of John Winthrop Jr.’s economic development projects, which included silver exploration, lead mining, and an ironworks, see Woodward, *Prospero’s America*.

<sup>475</sup>The king desired to bring the “distant dominions and the severall interests and governments thereof into a nearer prospect and consultacon.” “Charles II’s Patent Constituting a Council of Trade, 7

Governor John Winthrop Jr. and other Connecticut officials surmised that this political change in England offered them opportunities to solidify Connecticut's holdings. As the crown debated on how best to incorporate the colonies, Winthrop Jr. and other Connecticut leaders made overtures to the restored royal government in London. Winthrop Jr. traveled to England in 1661 to secure a permanent royal charter for Connecticut, underscoring the importance of the mission.<sup>476</sup> Connecticut based its claims on the Warwick Patent, but by 1639 Connecticut leaders had devised a new plan for centralized government under the Fundamental Orders. These eleven laws spelled out a democratic system of government for the colony, created official offices for that government, clarified the relationship between the towns and the colonial government, and established the two General Courts that met in April and September of every year. The General Court was the "Supreme Power of the Commonwealth," and had the power to "make laws or repeal them, to grant levies, to admit freemen, to dispose of lands undisposed of."<sup>477</sup> Connecticut officials realized that their title claims were legally precarious, since they lacked any official documentation from the English government conferring lands to them. Winthrop's journey to London was thus of critical importance.

By April 23, 1662, Winthrop completed his negotiations and Charles II issued the royal charter, which "allowed the Colony the freedom to run its own government with

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November 1660," *NYCD*, III: 30-31; "Majesty's Commission for a Council of Foreign Plantations, 1 December 1660, *NYCD*, III: 33; Sosin, *English America*, 93; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135.

<sup>476</sup> Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 43. John Winthrop Jr. served as Connecticut governor in 1635, 1657-58, deputy governor in 1658-59, and was re-elected Connecticut governor in 1659. He was annually re-elected governor of the colony from 1659 until his death in 1676. As Walter Woodward shows in his latest biography of John Winthrop Jr., the younger Winthrop had extensive contacts within English high society due to his family and his own academic and alchemical studies. During his 1661 trip to England, he not only secured Connecticut a new royal charter, he became the first colonial member of the Royal Society.

<sup>477</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 45-47.

little or no oversight from England.”<sup>478</sup> The charter contained many of the same liberties and procedures outlined in the Fundamental Orders, allowing for a great deal of continuity in its legal and governmental status. The Connecticut General Court (also called the General Assembly) acted as a legislature and a judicial body, proposing new legislation and hearing individual cases; it still met twice a year (now May and October), and it consisted of “the governor, deputy-governor, and twelve assistants.”<sup>479</sup> The royal charter also redrew the colonial map. New Haven lost its status as a separate colony, and its towns were absorbed into Connecticut by 1665; they move expanded not only Connecticut, but Winthrop’s sphere of influence.<sup>480</sup>

The trip was a clear success, personally and professionally, for Governor Winthrop. The English Royal Society made him the first colonial member of their organization. The Royal Society extended Winthrop’s network of relationships — and by extension, Cassacinamon’s — as many of its members served in Charles II’s colonial regulatory agencies, such as the Board of Trade, the Council for Plantations, and the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel.<sup>481</sup> The charter government did not require

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<sup>478</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 47-48, 58. The trip to England strengthened Winthrop’s relationship with the royal court and London society in a number of ways. As Sarah Holmes noted in her dissertation, while in England, Winthrop worked on establishing several “entrepreneurial projects,” such as an iron works and salt factory, which he hoped would bring in more capital for the colony. He also joined the Royal Society on January 1, 1662, for whom he would record scientific observations and specimens that he sent back to the Society to advance their scientific knowledge of North America. Governor Winthrop took the time to renew personal connections between his family and the crown. According to one anecdote referenced in Holmes’ work, Winthrop gave Charles II a ring that the king’s father had given to Winthrop’s grandfather.

<sup>479</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 48-49.

<sup>480</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 280-281; Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 7, 153-156, 300. A variety of political and economic factors had contributed to New Haven’s downfall, but the fact that New Haven harbored three of the regicide judges that sentenced Charles I added extra incentive for Charles II to support Connecticut.

<sup>481</sup>Woodward, *Prospero’s America*, 7, 263-266, 273

the governor or elected officials to be members of an approved religious body, although the Congregational Church was the colony's established religion. In a sign that reflected concern over the state of the Anglo-Indian frontier, and perhaps a renewed commitment to the spiritual salvation of the indigenous peoples, the royal charter also called upon the colony to "administer the gospel to the Indians living within their borders," at the same time it gave it leave to engage in pre-emptive attacks against hostile tribes.<sup>482</sup>

By the early 1660s, Governor Winthrop and other Connecticut leaders seemed more interested in converting Algonquians than they had been in the past.<sup>483</sup> Winthrop himself reportedly asked one Reverend Thomas James of East Hampton, who was proficient in the local Algonquian dialect, to come to Connecticut and preach to the Natives, promising the full support of the colony if he did so.<sup>484</sup> In 1660, colonial officials set aside funds for Mr. William Tompson, who was paid a salary and "encouraged to proceed in learning the Indian Language and to teach and Instruct the Pequotts and other Indians elswer as hee may haue oppertunitie." Tompson was also

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<sup>482</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 48.

<sup>483</sup>Winthrop used his connections in the Royal Society to try and secure funding for his projects with New England Algonquians. He submitted a proposal to Robert Boyle, a member of the Council for Foreign Plantations and head of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, for the corporation's help in raising money for an agricultural and civilization program involving a band of Eastern Niantics. This band was still under the authority of the sachem Ninigret, and lived in the disputed Rhode Island zone. When they could not originally provide funding, Winthrop wrote Boyle and requested the corporation review his proposal again. When he returned to the colonies, Winthrop asked the corporation to fund the missionary efforts of Minister William Tompson to the Pequots. See "John Winthrop to the Governor of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England," *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 9: 45-47; William Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649-1776: Missionary Society to the American Indians* (London: 1961), 52-57, 107-108; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 265-267.

<sup>484</sup>*NYCD*, 14: 610-611; *MHSC*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 7: 485-486; Tompson, *History of Long Island*, 2: 124-126; Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 201; Francis Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut: From the First Survey of the Coast in 1612 to 1860* (New London, CT: 1895), 129; Thomas Birch, ed., *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle* (London, 1772), I: lxxi; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 267.

“promised suitable Recompence out of the Indian Stocke for his paines and Incurragement therein.” The Commissioners of the United Colonies also tasked a Mr. Peirson “to apply himself...to the worke of preaching the gospel to the Pequotts liueing thereabouts with promise of suitable Incurragement for his care paines and trauell therein.”<sup>485</sup>

In 1660, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England — an organization committed to administering the Anglican gospel to Native communities — distributed six coats to the Pequot principal officers and their assistants. Fine coats were often given to Native leaders by English officials, and these gifts were a gesture that the Society hoped would “encourage them in their service to the English in Governing the Pequotts and perswadeing them to attend such meas as shalbee used to gaine them to the knowlidge of God.”<sup>486</sup> Since no Pequot officer held a status higher than Cassacinamon, he often received these gifts.<sup>487</sup> This sort of exchange was a necessary part of Native diplomatic protocols, which colonial officials and missionaries still observed if they hoped to retain Cassacinamon’s support. Although the Pequots had agreed to place themselves under direct English jurisdiction, they had not given up the pretenses of Native diplomatic custom. As long as the English required Pequot assistance to maintain a semblance of control or influence on the frontier, English officials proved willing to follow at least some of these protocols.

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<sup>485</sup>“September 1660,” *Acts*, II: 251; “September 1662,” *Acts*, II: 277, 288.

<sup>486</sup>“September 1660,” *Acts*, II: 250; Ebenezer A.M. Hazard, *Historical Collections Consisting of State Papers and Other Authentic Documents; Intended as Materials for an History of the United States of America* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 2: 435; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 109.

<sup>487</sup>“September 1662,” *Acts*, II: 278.

Although these missionaries offered presents to Cassacinamon, there is no evidence that Cassacinamon ever converted to Christianity. While missionaries had some presence on their reservations, Christian conversions among the Mashantucket Pequots were rare in the seventeenth-century. The available evidence suggests that, at best, a limited syncretism occurred for some Pequots.<sup>488</sup> A tribally-sponsored archaeological dig on the Mashantucket reservation uncovered a Pequot cemetery used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The cemetery, now called Long Pond, belonged to the “Councilor’s Town,” one of the two main settlements on Mashantucket.<sup>489</sup> One of the burials was that of a young eleven-year-old Pequot girl, whose funerary artifacts demonstrate this limited religious syncretism. Like the other interred Indians, the girl was buried in a traditional manner. She was placed in a circular pit lined with reed and rush mats, her legs and arms were bent at the knees and elbows and drawn to her chin, symbolic of the fetal position and reflecting the connection between life and death. The top of her skull pointed toward the southwest, where the indigenous peoples of New England believed the soul traveled to Cautantowwit’s house.<sup>490</sup> She was buried with several important items: wampum, jewelry, clothing, and a medicine bundle containing items of spiritual power. Those items included a bear’s left front paw, and a folded page from a seventeenth century Bible. The inclusion of the Bible passage among these other

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<sup>488</sup>If it is true that Cassacinamon never converted to Christianity, he shared that distinction with his Mohegan rival Uncas. Both men lived until old age, never having converted to Christianity, secure in the knowledge that they had done all they could to secure their peoples’ futures as much as possible. It was not until the Great Awakening of the early 1740s that English missionaries had any real success in converting the Pequots. “Interview with Dr. Kevin McBride,” interview with author, July 2008; Kevin A. McBride, “Bundles, Bears and Bibles: Interpreting Seventeenth Century Native “Texts,”” unpublished manuscript, Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center Archives, (Hereafter MPMRC).

<sup>489</sup>McBride, “Bundles.”

<sup>490</sup>McBride, “Bundles”; William Simmons, *Cautantowwit’s House: An Indian Burial Ground on the island of Conanicut in Narragansett Bay* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1970).

totems of power suggest that while this girl and her family were not Christian converts, they recognized that the Bible passage in question held some kind of power or significance, and they sought to incorporate that into their ritual.<sup>491</sup> Despite English efforts to make spiritual inroads among this “subjugated” people, the Pequots still maintained considerable personal agency in matters of faith.

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When John Winthrop Jr. was once again elected as governor under the new charter, and John Mason, as his deputy-governor, Cassacinamon and Uncas gained access to the two highest elected officials in Connecticut. Winthrop continued to be elected as governor until his death in 1676; under his leadership Cassacinamon enjoyed access to the highest political office in the entire colony. While Cassacinamon’s friendship and alliance with Governor Winthrop afforded him and the Pequots certain protections, it did not guarantee them complete security or non-interference by the English colonists. Technically, the Connecticut General Court was the ultimate authority in the colony when it came to dealing with Native peoples. However, individual towns also inserted themselves into Anglo-Algonquian affairs, especially when it came to land issues. The General Court “guaranteed” land rights for Native communities, but the surveys for reservation lands were conducted by the neighboring towns and kept in their land records. This meant that the town of New London (and later offshoot towns like Groton) had a significant impact on Mashantucket Pequot lands, for the town proprietors “viewed reservation lands as synonymous with common lands.” This was important, because the towns controlled the distribution of common lands. According to Dr. Sarah Holmes, the

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<sup>491</sup>McBride, “Bundles”; Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1650-1775* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 192.



Mashantucket Pequots were thus “forced to maneuver between three entities, the General Assembly who maintained authority over reservation lands, versus the town, and the town proprietors, who wanted to manage reservation lands to benefit their inhabitants.”<sup>492</sup> Cassacinamon required all of his political skills to navigate through this new batch of hurdles, as the Mashantucket community drew upon their history of “extra legal” actions to protect what was theirs.

Between 1650 and 1670, the population in Connecticut rose from nearly four thousand to over twelve thousand people.<sup>493</sup> The General Court asserted its control over land issues, when it banned individuals and towns from “buying land...either directly or indirectly” from Natives without first getting approval from the General Court.<sup>494</sup> However, as the colonial population grew, this proved difficult. Land issues took on an increased importance for the Pequots, whose legal status as a “conquered people” under English jurisdiction placed them at certain disadvantages when compared to their Algonquian neighbors. Sachems like Uncas possessed “native rights” to the land, which “pertained to the aboriginal territory a tribe either possessed or relied on for their subsistence at the time of European contact.” Connecticut authorities had to bargain with the Mohegans for land, which gave Uncas some leverage in his dealings with them. The Pequots fell under a different category than the Mohegans; Pequot “native right” no

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<sup>492</sup>Holmes has studied Pequot land rights and strategies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 53, 57.

<sup>493</sup>“Estimated Population of the American Colonies, 1630-1780,” Bureau of the U.S. Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, in the *1998 World Almanac and Book of Facts* (New York: Press Pub. Co., 1998), 378.

<sup>494</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself and My People,” 67.

longer existed, Connecticut “claimed and extinguished” Pequot title to their land by right of conquest.

Cassacinamon and the Pequots engaged in various personal and legal strategies to protect their lands from border disputes, protect their herbage rights, and seek restitution for damages caused by English hogs and cattle. In each of these issues, Cassacinamon took the lead in battling with English authorities on the Pequots’ behalf. As always, maintaining powerful allies proved an important tactic. The well-established Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance remained strong, but Cassacinamon expanded his network of allies when the Commissioners of the United Colonies appointed “overseers” for the Pequots. This office was designed to keep the community within the English orbit, but it may also be read as recognition of the fact that Cassacinamon and the Pequots still served a purpose within the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. The overseer position was a rotating one, and included prominent Connecticut men such as George Dennison, James Avery, Sam Mortgage, and Thomas Stanton. The overseers were the official liaisons between the Pequots and colonial authorities. Stanton had a long history of interactions with New England Algonquians, but it was Avery with whom Cassacinamon and the Pequots had the best working relationship. Colonial authorities saw the overseers as a symbol of their dominion over Cassacinamon, but the Pequot sachem viewed it as an opportunity to extend his own network of English allies and advocates.<sup>495</sup>

While the Pequots were technically under English jurisdiction, they were not without legal protections, which they frequently exercised. One of the most important

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<sup>495</sup>“September 1661,” *Acts*, II: 265; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People, 63, 120.

lessons they learned was the need to keep copies of legal documents. Cassacinamon and his counselors held copies of important court orders and grants, and they referred to them when issuing petitions on behalf of their community. For example, the Pequots retained a copy of the original 1650 agreement from the General Court that granted them Noank in exchange for their lands at Nameag. Pequot leaders kept this and other documents well into the eighteenth century when, during the controversy over the Noank land division, the Pequots explained that they had their own copy of the document to present before the General Court.<sup>496</sup> The Pequots knew that any legal arguments they made depended upon this documentation, so they made a concerted effort to ensure that they maintained such documentary evidence. When Cassacinamon's chief lieutenant, a Pequot with the English name of Daniel, lost all of his belongings in a fire, John Winthrop Jr.'s son, Fitz-John Winthrop, wrote to his father on Daniel's behalf. Fitz-John Winthrop made arrangements to have several items replaced as soon as possible. The valuables that Daniel lost included his "wardrobe, and armoury, Indian plate," and £100 "Indian money." He also lost several "papers of worth," including a "record of Court" that confirmed Daniel's position as Cassacinamon's chief counselor.<sup>497</sup> This critical piece of information served as colonial recognition of Daniel's place within the Pequot leadership structure. The colonial government's acknowledgement of proper Pequot leaders may have reduced any attempts at illegal business dealings between colonists and Pequots who did not speak for the community.

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<sup>496</sup>Indian Papers, ser. 1 (1647-1759), Volume 1, Connecticut State Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. I: 75a (Hereafter *Indian Papers*); Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 117.

<sup>497</sup>Winthrop Papers, *CMHS* 1849 [10] 3<sup>rd</sup> series: 113; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 117.

Another strategy Cassacinamon employed to protect Pequot lands and interests was the tried and true use of petitions. Cassacinamon agitated for more lands, and when he believed that his requests were not processed fast enough, he withheld Pequot tribute payments and filed petitions to goad the English into action.<sup>498</sup> In 1666, after receiving the 2,000 acre Mashantucket grant, Cassacinamon petitioned the General Court and requested a survey of the reservation.<sup>499</sup> Cassacinamon's petition revealed a keen understanding of the English legal process, and English perceptions of Indians within the colonial world. In the petition, he argued:

Where as it hath pleased this Honored Court to grant us a trackt of land for our accomadation, the which hath bin in part layed out by your order, we humbly crave that said lands lines may be perfited, and the same orderly recorded to us and ours, that we may not afterward meete with any trouble or disrest about the same being Confirmed by your authoritye.<sup>500</sup>

It is clear that Cassacinamon knew how to manipulate English perceptions concerning the subordinate nature of their Native "dependents." By requesting that a survey record the reservation boundaries, Cassacinamon demonstrated his awareness concerning the necessity of such legal documents in fending off white encroachments of Pequot lands. Cassacinamon's adamant stance to "perfect" and "record" the Mashantucket borders does not seem unusual when one considers the hassles he faced in the preceding few years. In 1659, the Town of New London voted to set aside the land at a place called "Robin's Fort Hill" near Noank as common land. The General Court often

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<sup>498</sup>“September 1660,” *Acts*, II: 250; “September 1661,” *Acts*, II: 266; “September 1662,” *Acts*, II: 284.

<sup>499</sup>“May 10, 1666,” *CR*, II: 36

<sup>500</sup>Wyllys Papers, in *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society, Volume XXII*, ed. Charles J. Hoadly (Hartford, CT: Connecticut Historical Society, 1928), XXI: 162 (Hereafter *CCHS*); Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 114.

allowed towns to use Native fields as common lands after Native harvests were brought in.<sup>501</sup> The next year, Cassacinamon became embroiled in a dispute with a New London settler named John Packer over a border issue, with the court granting Packer “a spetiall Warrant contr Robbin Cussa: to appeare at June Court.”<sup>502</sup> In 1665, the sachem confronted Packer in court. Packer complained to Connecticut officials that he was in a “context betwixt him and the Indians of his land at Naiwayuncke [Noank]” over issues of boundaries and fencing.<sup>503</sup> Since the Mashantucket reservation lay within the far northeast corner of the town of New London, and therefore vulnerable to town encroachment, Cassacinamon had to clarify its boundaries. The General Court agreed with Cassacinamon, and it ratified “the returne of the Comitte that were ordered to lay out land to Cussisinimon and the Puquots und<sup>f</sup> him and doe order the Secretary to record it.”<sup>504</sup> Mashantucket was surveyed at the farthest reaches of New London, since it was the custom of the time to set aside lands for Natives that were too distant from established white settlements, thus making them unattractive to settlers.<sup>505</sup> However, given the pace of white settlement, and the conflicts Cassacinamon already faced concerning border issues, it made sense to prepare for possible future disputes. As white settlement expanded in Connecticut during the 1660s and 1670s, this provided the legal and written protection the Pequots needed in their arsenal should they have to petition the General

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<sup>501</sup> ICRC, New London Land Records, 1647-1666: 29; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 62.

<sup>502</sup>“May 15, 1660,” *Particular Court Records*, in *CCHS*, XXII: 213.

<sup>503</sup>ICRC, New London Land Records, 1665:5; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 123.

<sup>504</sup>“May 10, 1666,” *CR*, II: 36; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 104, 114.

<sup>505</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 104.

Court in the future. Cassacinamon's persistence protected the Mashantucket reservation into the eighteenth century.

Even though he won some key victories, the sachem was not immune to the social and political shifts that accompanied the increased English presence in Connecticut. A persistent problem faced by all Native peoples in the region was the encroachment of English livestock onto their fields, with hogs being the biggest problem.<sup>506</sup> Swine were voracious eaters. They consumed not only wild plants and the remaining stalks after the harvests, they devoured the crops themselves, foods placed in Native storage pits, and the clam beds on the coasts.<sup>507</sup> If the Algonquians attacked the animals, they risked fines or retaliation from colonials. Yet if they did not stop the animals, an entire season's crop could be destroyed.

Colonial officials, although occasionally sympathetic, offered no real solutions for Native peoples because the colonials refused to control their animals. Cassacinamon served as an interpreter in cases involving Natives charged with killing English hogs, helping the defendants state their cases. Occasionally, Cassacinamon succeeded. On

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<sup>506</sup>William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977 [1634]), 113; Cronon, *Changes*, 134-139.; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 91, 93; Oberg, *Uncas*, 158-159; Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. According to historian William Cronon, swine "were the weed creatures of New England. A typical litter consisted of four to twelve piglets, and since a sow could birth two litters a year, their numbers rose rapidly. The colonials preferred that their hogs run wild in the forests and outer regions of their towns, and forage for whatever food they could find; this kept the beasts far away from the English towns and fields. However, it created problems for indigenous communities, since the agriculture methods used by New England Algonquians created an environment that provided food for both wild animals and roaming livestock.<sup>506</sup> They hunted the wild animals, but the domesticated animals posed a problem. Domesticated livestock changed the ecological systems of the Americas. These animals proved to be a major commodity for the English colonists, but a devastating nuisance for Native peoples. Indigenous peoples in southern New England cultivated small plots of land, used them for a few seasons, and then abandoned the fields while they moved onto another plot. While the plot lay fallow new vegetation grew in the field drawing in wild game, which the Native Americans hunted. Domesticated animals were also attracted to Native fields – whether planted or fallow – but Natives were punished for damaging the colonial livestock if they attacked the animals.

<sup>507</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 91.

their own, and in conjunction with English authorities, the Pequots fenced their lands to protect them from the roving swine. In the Noank covenant signed by the Pequots and Connecticut in 1651, Cassacinamon agreed “in his owne behalfe and the behalf of the Rest of the pequatt Indians” that the Pequots “Shall fence the Same” lands they were given.<sup>508</sup> However, the swine and cattle tore through their fences; if the Natives killed the animals in retaliation, the English penalized them. In the same agreement that granted Noank to the Pequots, the Pequots were forced “to bear the damage” caused “by any English cattle, or hoggs,” and promised to “make good any hurt that shall be done to any English Cattle or hoggs by themselves.”<sup>509</sup> Although the Pequots promised to “bear the damage” done to their own fields, it did not prevent Cassacinamon from filing complaints in the 1660s seeking restitution for damages the animals caused.<sup>510</sup> In 1679, the Pequots and Mohegans each presented petitions to the General Court, where they complained that English cattle once again destroyed their crops. The General Court acknowledged the issue, and in an attempt to avoid any future conflicts, it ordered that fence viewers survey the Pequot and Mohegan fields to ensure the fences were maintained. The Court also allowed the Natives to build pens in which to keep any

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<sup>508</sup>“November 18, 1651,” *Indian Papers*, I: 2.

<sup>509</sup>“October 11-18, 1666,” *CR*, II: 51. The 1666 law to prohibit the killing of hogs said “that if any person either English or Indian within this Colony shall, under pretence of Wild Hoggs, attempt to kill or willingly destroy any hogg or swine, great or small, in the Commons within the liberties of this Colony, the person or persons soe doing shal pay just damadges to the owners of such swine when knowen, and upon conviction of the breach of this order pay a fine of of 5£. for each swine to the Public Treasury, unless it be made evidently to appeare to the Townesmen where the person inhabits that the swine that he kild were his owne; and that noe man shal employ any Indian to kill hoggs in the woods upon the foresaid penalty.”

<sup>510</sup>“May 13, 1662,” *Particular Court Records*, in *CCHS*, XXII: 247; “September 1662,” *Acts*, II: 284; *CR*, 3: 42-43.

roaming cattle they found, although it is unknown how often such pens were used.<sup>511</sup>

However, occasional victories did not stop the underlying problem.

Despite his critical knowledge of English legal proceedings, Cassacinamon still experienced setbacks to his agenda. Even as Cassacinamon achieved a major victory with the 2,000 acre Mashantucket reservation, he soon filed petitions for more territory. He petitioned for additional lands at the headwater of the Mystic River, but the English continually denied his requests.<sup>512</sup> This land lay at the heart of the Pequots' traditional territory, so this served as an attempt by Cassacinamon to reclaim more of his people's homeland. Colonial authorities refused his request because the Mystic River territory proved attractive to English settlers. A desire to keep the Pequots under their orbit may also have factored into their refusal. Their refusal demonstrated that no matter how honored or essential Cassacinamon was in maintaining the Anglo-Algonquian frontier, he did not have *carte blanche* to get what he wanted. This was especially true if it conflicted with critical English goals.

Connecticut statutes from 1650 onward declared the right of the General Court to control sales of Native land, and to prevent settlers "from buying any land of the Indians, either directly or indirectly," without their authorization. The statutes also prevented Natives from selling timber or herbage rights if they did not have the approval of the General Court.<sup>513</sup> Herbage rights referred to the right of "English livestock to graze upon reservation lands after the Indian harvest." However, the Pequots alienated their own

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<sup>511</sup>CR, 3: 42-43; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 92.

<sup>512</sup>Jack Campisi, "The Emergence of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, 1637-1975," in *Pequots in Southern New England*, 119; Richard A. Wheeler, *The Pequot Indians – An Historical Sketch* (n.p.: 1887), 14, 18-19.

<sup>513</sup>"February 5, 1651," CR, I: 214.



herbage rights in one of the earliest breaches of this law.<sup>514</sup> In 1660, the Commissioners of the United Colonies appointed Reverend William Thompson to minister the Gospel to the Pequots. Reverend Thompson resided at Noank signed an agreement with Cassacinamon and his counselor Daniel for herbage rights in a field on the reservation. Cassacinamon and Daniel affirmed that the field was “granted and confirmed to us to be for a planting field for the use of us an o<sup>r</sup> heirs forever.” At the same time, they sold to Thompson the right “to have and to hold the said field from year, to year, from the Twentieth day of the month called October until the Twentieth day of March for to put in Cattle, Sheep, or horses to Eat what Stalks of Corne or Grass shall be then left by us to him the said William Thompson his heires and Assignes for Ever.”<sup>515</sup> However by 1664, Cassacinamon complained to the County Court of New London that Thompson had violated this arrangement. Instead of the seasonal, usufruct right that Cassacinamon sold Thompson, Thompson permanently seized the land granted to him. The county court found in favor of Cassacinamon, and voided the deal.<sup>516</sup>

The ruling was a pyrrhic victory. The court negated the agreement based on the fact “Casyecinamon hath no power to dispose of the Land or herberge but onely for the pequits use for planting the land at Nawywonuck.”<sup>517</sup> The court recognized that the land in question was Cassacinamon’s and the Pequots’ to use, and returned it to them. However, they did not punish Thompson for violating the original contract. Instead, they

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<sup>514</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 14, 78.

<sup>515</sup>“February 4, 1660,” *Robert C. Winthrop Manuscript Collection*, Connecticut State Archives, 1: 96a (Hereafter *RCW*).

<sup>516</sup>*Indian Papers*, I: 72.

<sup>517</sup>*Ibid.*

erased the contract, and the violation, by saying the parties involved had no right to make it in the first place. The court reaffirmed that neither the Pequots themselves, nor local town officials, “had the ability to alienate lands the General Court granted the Pequot rights to.”<sup>518</sup> Although Cassacinamon retained a great deal of influence, colonial authorities always eagerly exerted their authority whenever possible.

## II

Based on the evidence gathered by Charles II’s Council for Foreign Plantations and the continued resistance displayed by the United Colonies, King Charles II created a royal commission in 1664. He tasked the commission with two goals: establish royal control over the New England colonies and conquer the Dutch colony of New Netherlands.<sup>519</sup> To that end, the royal commissioners — Richard Nicolls, Robert Carr, Samuel Maverick, and George Cartwright — launched several plans to establish royal dominance. They attempted to resolve the ongoing colonial boundary disputes, ordered the enforcement of the Navigation Acts, and investigated charges that the New England colonies had violated “the civil and religious liberties of the king’s subjects.” The royal agents also gathered military support from the colonies to help conquer their Dutch neighbor. The royal commissioners also received secret instructions to convince the

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<sup>518</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 79.

<sup>519</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135; Webb, *1676*, 226; “Letter to Lord Chancellor Clarendon, after 19 December 1660,” “Captain Thomas Breedon to Council for Foreign Plantations, 11 March 1660/1661,” and “Maverick to Clarendon, n.d.,” all in “The Clarendon Papers,” *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1869* (New York, 1870), 24, 17-18, 33-34.

magistrates of Massachusetts Bay “to submit their charter for royal revision and review and to report on the state of relations between the colonists and the Indians.”<sup>520</sup>

In July 1664, Nicolls and Cartwright landed in Boston, while Carr and Maverick disembarked at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.<sup>521</sup> They marked their initial visit to the Bay Colony by delivering Charles II’s pronouncement and submitting their request for aid against the Dutch. In this matter, the royal commissioners received the desired support. Dutch attacks on English settlements on Long Island facilitated colonial acceptance of the mission. However, Massachusetts agreed to commit troops to the mission only after holding a vote of their entire General Court — an act that the royal commissioners found “irksome,” but that enabled the Bay Colony to exert their independence.<sup>522</sup> Once that bit of legal procedure was conducted, the English marshaled their forces. They sailed towards New Netherland with a squadron of four ships and 450 soldiers and militiamen, led by royal commissioner and colonel Richard Nicolls.<sup>523</sup>

By August 1664, the English expedition readied for the siege of New Amsterdam. Dutch governor Peter Stuyvesant hastily reinforced New Amsterdam’s defenses, while he negotiated with the English forces. Nicolls demanded nothing short of a full surrender. After bitter debate, Stuyvesant gave in to the inevitable; on September 8, 1664 the

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<sup>520</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135; “Instructions to Commissioners,” *NYCD*, III: 51-53; Robert C. Ritchie, *The Duke’s Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1664-1691* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977): 19.

<sup>521</sup> John Gorham Palfrey, *A Compendious History of New England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1873), 2: 78, 582.

<sup>522</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 54; *MCR*, 4, part 2, 164; John Romeyn Rodhead, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* (Hereafter *DCHNY*), (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1853), 3: 110.

<sup>523</sup>Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 174; John Romeyn Brodhead, *History of the State of New York* (New York: 1853-1871), I: 735-745.

English took over New Amsterdam, which they renamed New York in honor of the king's brother and the colony's new proprietor, James, the Duke of York. The other Dutch outposts in the colony fell in short order, and by October 1664, the Dutch colony of New Netherland was no more.<sup>524</sup>

John Winthrop Jr. displayed little of the reluctance of Massachusetts Bay. The cooperation between Governor Winthrop and these agents of the Restoration, in particular Richard Nicolls, benefitted not only Winthrop and Connecticut, but Cassacinamon as well. Later, the relationship between New York and Connecticut grew strained, due to conflicts over colonial boundaries and overlapping patents. Initially, however, Winthrop Jr. eagerly established an amicable relationship with his new neighbor. In much the same way that Cassacinamon conducted a balancing act between the Pequots and the English, so too did Governor Winthrop balance Connecticut autonomy with compliance with the crown.<sup>525</sup> This spirit of cooperation meant that for a time, Cassacinamon had access to two colonial governors. Winthrop's connection to Nicolls also gave Cassacinamon access to broader regional power brokers and potential allies.

When Colonel Nicolls assumed the office of New York governor, he established relations between the new English government and the Natives who lived in or near the New York colony. He faced a difficult task. The Algonquians of the Hudson River Valley had waged several wars against the Dutch. It also meant sending diplomatic

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<sup>524</sup>Ibid.

<sup>525</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 130; Woodward, *Prospero's America*, 279-281, 286-287. Winthrop and Nicolls maintained a positive, cordial relationship with one another, even after Nicolls returned to England in 1667.

overtures to the Mohawks, who remained a feared and respected power in the region.<sup>526</sup>

The success of the New York colony depended on the ability of the new English authorities to establish a peace on this part of the Anglo-Indian frontier; peace with the Mohawks was critical, since they could ally themselves with the French and cause trouble. The English had long considered the Mohawks as either a dangerous potential enemy, or a dangerous potential ally. In New England, fear of the Mohawks cast a shadow over Anglo-Indian relations. They loomed in the public consciousness as both a military threat and as a political tool. New England Algonquians often invoked the suggestion or suspicion of joining with the Mohawks as a threat to encourage the English to side with one Native leader or another.<sup>527</sup> Thus, the English understood the importance of maintaining peace on the New York Anglo-Indian frontier.

In the spring, summer, and fall of 1665, several rounds of negotiations took place among the English, the Mohawks, and the Hudson Valley Algonquians. Some of the most important negotiations took place between the English and the Esopus Indians, a Lenape group who lived just west of the Hudson River near the Catskills Mountains in what is now Ulster County, New York.<sup>528</sup> The Esopus fought two wars with the Dutch, in 1659-1660 and 1663, and these recent conflicts convinced Governor Nicolls of the urgency of establishing peace with this group. In October 1665, the Esopus and the English government of New York concluded a treaty. Several Native observers and

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<sup>526</sup>Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 7, 139, 158-159; Salisbury, "Indians and Colonists," 86-90.

<sup>527</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 110-115.

<sup>528</sup>Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 7.

translators were present at the proceedings, and one of them was Robin Cassacinamon, who endorsed the treaty with his own mark.<sup>529</sup>

Why would Cassacinamon take part in a treaty negotiation over one hundred and fifty miles away from his home?<sup>530</sup> Cassacinamon's friend and ally John Winthrop Jr. entered into an intense correspondence with Governor Nicolls as he established relations with the local Native groups.<sup>531</sup> Nicolls requested Governor Winthrop's help in these negotiations; since this involved sensitive diplomacy between Natives and English, Winthrop enlisted the aid of his partner Cassacinamon. Cassacinamon came highly recommended to the New York governor. When Governor Nicolls sought Native allies for a military expedition, Winthrop Jr. praised the Mashantucket Pequots, and Cassacinamon in particular, saying that "if any Indians be employed" in such business, there were "non more fit...then Robin & some other Pequot Indians."<sup>532</sup> This praise reflected Cassacinamon's role as a "dependable" Indian among the English. However, it may have also referred to the Pequots' reputation as fierce warriors. During the Pequot War, when the Pequots were unpredictable enemies, this reputation was something to be feared. But once securely allied with the English, Winthrop considered it a benefit.

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<sup>529</sup>“An Agreement between Richard Nicolls Esq. Governor under his Royall Highnesse the Duke of York and the Sachems and People Called the Sapes Indyans, October 1665,” *NYCD*, 13: 399-401. In 1666, Winthrop negotiated with Mohawk sachems, and persuaded them not to ally with the French in the latest war between England and France. “John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, July 15, 1666,” *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, (Boston, 1882), VIII: 99-101; “John Winthrop, Jr. to Lord Arlington, October 25, 1666,” *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, VIII: 101-103.

<sup>530</sup>McBride, “Legacy,” 82.

<sup>531</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, June 28, 1665,” *MHSC*, vol. 3, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 96-97; “John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, July 11, 1665,” 97-99; “John Winthrop, Jr. to Richard Nicolls, July 15, 1666,” 99-101; “John Winthrop, Jr. to Richard Nicolls, November 28, 1666,” 105-107; “John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, December 24, 1666,” 107-111; “John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, January 2, 1666[-67],” 111-114; “John Winthrop, Jr., to Richard Nicolls, March 6, 1666[-67],” 115-116.

<sup>532</sup>ICRC, U-172; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 110.

Cassacinamon's role in the treaty process indicates that he had earned the trust of both colonists and Natives in the region, something that defied the "subjugated" status that he and the Pequots held.<sup>533</sup> By creating ties among the Native peoples in New York, Cassacinamon extended his diplomatic sphere. It may not have been a coincidence that after he completed his part in the New York negotiations, Cassacinamon occasionally invoked the threat of moving to the New York frontier to goad his English allies into helping him resolve disputes against his neighbors.<sup>534</sup> The Pequots had not employed that particular tactic since the Pequot War. For Cassacinamon to invoke it after his trip to New York suggests that perhaps the Pequot leader seized the opportunity presented by the English to his own advantage. At the very least, it reinforced his reputation as a regional political figure. This is exemplified in the 1665 New York treaty itself. Next to Cassacinamon's signature mark on the treaty was the written version of his name, "Robin Cinnaman." Also next to it was his title, "Pekoct Sachem." It was clear that by 1665, Cassacinamon's reputation as leader and diplomat had been firmly established.<sup>535</sup>

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While Nicolls led the expedition to take New Netherlands, the three other royal commissioners began their tour of the New England colonies.<sup>536</sup> At each meeting with colonial leaders, the royal commissioners asked the colonial governments to "remove church membership restrictions, if any, from the franchise and to strike any laws

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<sup>533</sup>McBride, "Legacy," 82.

<sup>534</sup>*Indian Papers*, I: 15.

<sup>535</sup>*NYCD*, 13: 401.

<sup>536</sup>They began in Plymouth then travelled to Rhode Island and Connecticut. After Connecticut, they moved back through Rhode Island; only then did they begin their official visit of Massachusetts Bay. Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 55.

repugnant to the laws of England.”<sup>537</sup> Reactions to the royal commissioners were mixed. Apart from the mission against New Netherland, Massachusetts Bay refused to comply with the royal commissioners, determined to maintain the freedom to which it had become accustomed. However, Plymouth, Rhode Island, and Connecticut each cooperated with the royal envoys. The cooperative colonies went to great lengths to ensure a peaceful working relationship, even in matters where the colonies disagreed with the crown. There were several possible reasons for this. The royal agents used a more conciliatory approach when dealing with those three colonies, seeing that they were “underdogs to the overbearing Massachusetts.” Colonial officials did not dissuade the king’s agents of that perception. In their letters to the king, the royal commissioners praised the three cooperative colonies and emphasized the difficult behavior of the Bay Colony. Charles II thanked those colonies for their earnest attempts at a working relationship with the crown. In his letter to the Plymouth government, Charles noted that “Your carriage seems to be set off with the more luster by the contrary deportment of the colony of the Massachusetts, as if, by their refractoriness, they had designed to recommend and heighten the merit of your compliance.”<sup>538</sup>

Collaboration with the king’s agents offered Connecticut and Rhode Island the chance to settle their ongoing border dispute in the Narragansett country.<sup>539</sup> The visit also continued the friendly overtures Winthrop Jr. cultivated when he traveled to England three years earlier, so it is no surprise that he and other Connecticut officials maintained

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<sup>537</sup>Ibid.

<sup>538</sup>Palfrey, *History of New England*, 2: 68; “Samuel Maverick to John Winthrop, Jr., August 29, 1666,” *MHSC*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 7: 313; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 55. Samuel Maverick noted to John Winthrop Jr. in 1666, writing that the king “resents as ill the Massachusetts standing out, or rather Rebellion.”

<sup>539</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 135-136; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 55.



the cordiality of that relationship. In September 1664, Governor Winthrop wrote to Edward Hyde, 1<sup>st</sup> earl of Clarendon and Charles II's Lord Chancellor, in London, and spoke of the "happy arrival" of the commissioners in the colonies. "Dutie & affection inforceth me humbly to acknowledge w<sup>th</sup> all thankfulnesse your Lordships accumulate goodnesse to your servant," wrote the governor, "and this colony of Connecticutt, & all New England."<sup>540</sup> In a letter of thanks, Connecticut officials expressed their gratitude not only for the favors Charles bestowed upon them, but also for "sending over your Majesty's Honorable Commissioners by whom we received your Majesty's Gracious Letter." Governor Winthrop himself expressed the hope that the commissioners and the colonies continued to find ways "for the inlargment of his Ma<sup>ties</sup> dominions, by filling that vacant wilderness in tyme w<sup>th</sup> plantations of his Ma<sup>ties</sup> subjects."<sup>541</sup>

The royal commissioners did not limit themselves to sharing niceties with officials like Winthrop Jr.; they made a concerted effort to exert their influence upon the Anglo-Indian frontier as well. Officials in London were very concerned about the failure

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<sup>540</sup>John Winthrop, Jr., to Lord Clarendon, September 25, 1664," *MHSC*, vol. 3, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 92. Edward Hyde had a close relationship with the Charles II for many years. Having been a moderate Parliamentary critic of Charles I, Hyde eventually committed himself to the royalist camp during the civil war. His moderation alienated him from the king for a time, but he still held enough favor with the royalists to be made the guardian of the Prince of Wales. By 1658, Hyde was back in full favor with Charles II, and he became his Lord Chancellor. Hyde's daughter, Anne, married the king's brother, James, the Duke of York, making Hyde grandfather to two future queens: Mary II and Anne. Hyde was one of the original proprietors of the royal colony of Carolina. However, Hyde was later forced into exile after falling out of favor with the king once again, due in large part to his poor record in the Second Anglo-Dutch War, where he was found to have violated the habeas corpus rights of prisoners. The House of Commons impeached him, and he was forced to flee to France in November 1667. While in exile, he completed his work on the *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, which chronicled what happened during the English Civil War. Upon his death in exile in 1674, his body was returned to England and buried in Westminster Abbey.

<sup>541</sup>"Address of Connecticut to Charles II, July 15, 1665," Winthrop Family Papers, *MHSC*, Reel 8; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 55.

of the Puritan colonies to firmly incorporate and control the Algonquians.<sup>542</sup> While the Commissioners of the United Colonies “could fine, they could threaten, and at times they could mediate and intervene” in Algonquian matters, they lacked the authority to control the region in the way English authorities desired.<sup>543</sup> More often than not, the Commissioners themselves were pawns of the power politics of the Natives. The king’s men also found that previous attempts to gain religious converts among the Natives lacked both effort and pious sincerity. Sir Robert Carr reported that because of this abrogation of their Christian duty, “The lives, Manners, & habits of those, whom they say are converted cannot be distinguished from those that are not.”<sup>544</sup> The royal agents determined that the colonies exacerbated their own problems due to their aggressive pursuit of land.

The royal commissioners flexed their power by involving themselves in the Narragansett land dispute. In a blow to many land speculators, they ruled that the Narragansetts were subjects of the English king and under the protection of Charles II. The Narragansett lands would be known as the “King’s Province,” and administered by Rhode Island. The commissioners determined that the Narragansett sachems Pessicus and Canonicus had submitted “themselves, people, and country into his Royall Majesties protection” to King Charles I in 1644. The royal commissioners declared all of the

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<sup>542</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 2, 136. These London officials were “metropolitans,” who, in the words of historian Michael Oberg “sought to establish dominion and civility along the Anglo-American frontiers. They hoped to derive a profit from their settlements, either for the crown or for their sponsoring organizations. They hoped to secure and defend their colonial possessions from enemies both Native American and European. And they hoped to spread English Christianity and English civility among the native population of the New World.”

<sup>543</sup>*Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>544</sup>“Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners concerning the Massachusetts,” in *Documentary History of the State of Maine*, 24 vols., ed. William Willis et al., eds., (Portland, ME: 1869-1916), 4: 294; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 136.

Atherton Company's claims to the Narragansett country null and void, and they ordered the purchasers to "quit & goe of the said pretended purchased lands."<sup>545</sup> The commissioners then paid a visit to the Narragansett country itself, where Narragansett leaders and the king's agents reaffirmed this arrangement via a reciprocal exchange of gifts, fulfilling Native and royal protocols.<sup>546</sup>

This was a victory for the Narragansetts who, by petitioning the king directly, had gone over the heads of the United Colonies.<sup>547</sup> Although the Narragansetts were the only Natives to directly petition the king, other Native leaders seized the opportunity to negotiate with this new English authority.<sup>548</sup> However, Cassacinamon does not appear to have made such pronouncements. Even though he lacked the official access to the royal commissioners, the Pequot sachem was not totally excluded. Cassacinamon parlayed his connection to Connecticut Governor Winthrop to access New York Governor Nicolls,

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<sup>545</sup>J.R. Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence, RI: A. Crawford Greene and Brother, 1856-1865), 2:59-60,128 (Hereafter *RICR*); *CSPCS*, 5:341-50, item 1103; *DCHNY*, 3:56; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 136; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 56-57. While the colonies chose to ignore the legal document that affirmed this arrangement, the Narragansetts had not; nor had Samuel Gorton, the Englishman who kept a copy of it in his possession for twenty years. The royal commissioners had been tasked to find this document. When they did, they admonished the colonists who ignored the Narragansetts' claims.

<sup>546</sup>*RICR*, 2:59; *CSPCS*, 5: 342, item 1103, 5: 274, item 925; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 56.

<sup>547</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 57.

<sup>548</sup>Roger Williams, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams 1629-1653*, ed. Glen W. LaFantasie (Hanover and London: Brown University Press, 1988), 2 Volumes, II: 577-579 (Hereafter *RWC*); *MHSC*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 7: 556; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 57. The royal commissioners also visited Metacom (Philip) of the Wampanoags, and found in his favor concerning a land dispute between the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts. This move suggested that the commissioners would not unfairly favor the Narragansetts, and it could be seen as further proof that the royal authorities intended to be the real authorities on the Anglo-Indian frontier. For his part, when Uncas found himself involved in yet another land dispute, the Mohegan grand sachem warned Connecticut magistrates that he was "weary of such Court attendance, intimating that if...there be no effectual course taken for a fair & just issue, he then shall be enforced to apply himself unto King Charles his Commissioners for relief."

and establish ties with Native people in the Hudson River Valley.<sup>549</sup> It is also suspicious that after years of petitions and complaints to Connecticut officials requesting more reservation lands, Cassacinamon received an additional two thousand acres at Mashantucket in 1666. This boon came after the Connecticut government entered its new cooperative arrangement with royal authorities, and after the sachem worked on behalf of royal officials in New York. These benefits reflected Cassacinamon's place within the political framework of the Anglo-Algonquian frontier.

Despite the presence of the royal commissioners, the king's agents did not foretell better fortunes for the southern New England Algonquians. The royal commissioners later amended their Narragansett order: they permitted English settlers to remain on the Narragansett lands they were living on until the king made a formal decision on the matter.<sup>550</sup> The royal commissioners may have declared the Atherton Company's holding null and void, but the colonials did not listen. The colonies continued to pressure the Narragansetts for more land, even though the Narragansetts believed their negotiations with the king's agents gave them an equal status to the colonies. The royal commissioners' failure to solve this problem illustrated the persistent challenges in governing the Anglo-Algonquian frontier.<sup>551</sup>

### III

Despite the designs of London metropolitans and their royal agents, royal efforts at curtailing the independent actions of the colonies were not successful. Even the Commissioners of the United Colonies were unsuccessful; after 1664, they would only

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<sup>549</sup>*NYCD*, 13: 399-401; McBride, "Legacy," 82.

<sup>550</sup>*DCHNY*, 3: 56; *RICR*, 2: 93-95; Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 58.

<sup>551</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 56-58.

meet once every three years, a sign that the individual colonies felt secure in doing what they wanted.<sup>552</sup> By the time the royalists had re-established themselves in England and flexed their political muscles in the colonies, the regional power balance in New England had tipped towards the colonials. An influx of English hard currency into the colonies soon followed that reenergized the colonial economy, and allowed them to demonetize wampum in 1663 and 1664.<sup>553</sup> While wampum maintained its cultural value for Native peoples, and retained an important function in Anglo-Indian relations (namely in treaties, tributes, and fines), its lost monetary value reduced the leverage available to the Algonquian peoples in the region. It also increased their isolation from the colonial exchange networks that the Natives had come to rely on for acquiring English trade goods.<sup>554</sup> New colonial laws accompanied this economic shift, laws that made Natives second-class subjects in Connecticut. These new laws made it illegal for Natives to work on the English Sabbath, to own guns, purchase alcohol, or enter English towns.<sup>555</sup> By

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<sup>552</sup>Colonial populations increased, along with their demands for land. Southern New England Algonquians grew increasingly marginalized, as colonials focused more on establishing economic and political relationships with Natives farther inland, like the Mohawks. These tensions rose throughout the 1660s, and reached crisis levels by the early 1670s. Oberg, *Uncas*, 102; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 150-151.

<sup>553</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 158; Ceci, "Wampum," 60-63.

<sup>554</sup>For an analysis of how Native peoples became dependent on English trade goods, see Peter A. Thomas, *In the Maelstrom of Change: The Indian Trade and Cultural Process in the Middle Connecticut River Valley, 1635-1665* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 261-333; Oberg, *Uncas*, 158; Cronon, *Changes*, 103; Neal Salisbury, "Toward the Covenant Chain: Iroquois and Southern New England Algonquians, 1637-1684," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors, 1600-1800*, ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 66.

<sup>555</sup>"February, 5, 1651," *CR*, 1: 214; "October 6, 1652," *CR*, 1: 235; "April 14, 1653," *CR*, 1: 240; "April 6, 1654," *CR*, 1: 254-255; "October 3, 1654," *CR*, 1: 263; "October 2, 1656," *CR*, 1: 284; "February, 26, 1657," *CR*, 1: 293; "April 9, 1657," *CR*, 1: 294; "June 15, 1659," *CR*, 1: 338; "May 17, 1660," *CR*, 1: 350-351; "October 4, 1660," *CR*, 1: 354; "August 19, 1663," *CR*, 1: 408; "October 11-18," *CR*, 2: 51; "May 9, 1667," *CR*, 2: 61; "October 14, 1669," *CR*, 2: 117; "October 14, 1669," *CR*, 2: 119.

taking these actions, colonials only reinforced the Anglo-Algonquian social divide and exerted their newfound dominance over the frontier.<sup>556</sup>

As the pressures mounted, the Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansetts continued their political schemes. Even in this changing political world, Cassacinamon relied on his skills as an intermediary, and his manipulation of information and misinformation, to promote his agenda.<sup>557</sup> Cassacinamon, Uncas, and Ninigret plotted against one another throughout the 1660s, as each sachem sought to keep his people safe from English encroachments, and to expand his own spheres of influence. In this respect, Cassacinamon proved their equal.

In the 1660s, Ninigret accused Cassacinamon of sending Pequot warriors into his territory to cause trouble, a charge that Cassacinamon denied. However, given the history between Cassacinamon and Ninigret, and the Pequot sachem's previous instigation of conflicts, it was a possibility. Cassacinamon's intentions remained a mystery, but the decision of the Commissioners of the United Colonies was not. They found in Cassacinamon's favor, saying the Pequot leader "hath not Employed or sent any of his Pequotts against the Narragansetts," and the individuals responsible "such as are taken and slayne... have justly suffered for their disobedience." Ninigret was then ordered "not to molest the Pequots upon the account." Furthermore, the Commissioners commanded that Ninigret not "Retaine any Pequotts that shall run from their Gou<sup>r</sup>; but to secure them and giue notice therof to their gou<sup>r</sup>: that they may fetch them home." The Commissioners applied the same ruling to Cassacinamon's old rival Uncas, who was

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<sup>556</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 159-161.

<sup>557</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 108-109; Uncas, *Oberg*, 152.

also reprimanded for disturbing the Pequots as they traveled to meet with the Commissioners.<sup>558</sup> Cassacinamon continued to use the English to keep the Pequots within his community and sphere of influence; thus he secured his own powerbase and deprived his rivals of any additional people. As the colonial population continued to expand, people proved a precious resource for Native leaders.

Yet, the ongoing battle between Cassacinamon and Uncas provided most of the drama for Cassacinamon, and both sachems used English authorities to achieve their goals. In 1662, Cassacinamon sued Uncas for restitution in a case involving the killing of English hogs. Cassacinamon and the Pequots were blamed for the killings and charged a fine. Cassacinamon argued that it was not the Pequots who had killed the beasts, but the Mohegans, and they should be the ones to pay the fine.<sup>559</sup> The following year, Cassacinamon accused Uncas of “entertaineing Pequott delinquents against his men” for the purposes of “abuseing the Constable of New London,” ostensibly to cause trouble for Cassacinamon with English officials.<sup>560</sup>

Cassinamon struck back at Uncas in ways besides lawsuits. In 1662 and 1663, Cassacinamon testified about a land claim Uncas had made before the Commissioners of the United Colonies. Cassacinamon worked with officials to reconstruct a territorial map, and testified as to the places he had hunted for deer as a boy, thereby confirming an area that was part of the original Pequot territory.<sup>561</sup> Uncas claimed these lands as his own,

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<sup>558</sup>“September 1660,” *Acts*, II: 248-249.

<sup>559</sup>“May 13, 1662,” *Records of the Particular Court*, in *CCHS*, XXII: 247. Cassacinamon identified as “Cussasinemo.”

<sup>560</sup>“September 1663,” *Acts*, II: 297.

<sup>561</sup>“Plan of the Pequot Country and Testimony of Uncas, Casasinomon, and Wesawegun, August 1662,” *Acts*, II: 450.

but Cassacinamon testified that much of the land Uncas claimed had been Pequot territory; therefore, it belonged to the English, not Uncas. He went further, saying that before the Pequot War Uncas was only the leader of a small community, and was often “proud and treacherous to the Pequot Sachem.” His insolence forced the Pequot sachem to “drive Uncas out of his country” as a punishment, and Uncas was only allowed back after “humbling” himself before the Pequots. It was only through his alliance with the English, Cassacinamon claimed, that Uncas was of any political importance; it was the English who “made him [Uncas] high.” Cassacinamon and the other witnesses (none of whom appear to have been supporters of Uncas), charged that “according to their manners and customs, Uncas had no lands at all, being so conquered...if [Uncas] should deny it, the thing is known to all the Indians round about.”<sup>562</sup>

Cassacinamon’s obstruction did not sit well with the Mohegan sachem. In 1663, Cassacinamon, his counselor Daniel, and another Indian named Catchpoonas petitioned the English for their help. According to Cassacinamon, Uncas planned to go to the General Court with a charge that the Pequots had hired an assassin to murder him, a charge Uncas had used against Native rivals in the past. However, Cassacinamon warned that Uncas was lying; his witness, an Indian man named John Hakes, who was the son of Catchpoonas, had been cast out of the Pequot community for theft and drunkenness.<sup>563</sup> Therefore, this act of spite on Uncas’s part should not be considered a serious charge. The Commissioners listened to Cassacinamon.

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<sup>562</sup> “Report of a Committee appointed to inquire respecting the Claims of Uncas to the Pequot Country; presented the Commissioners, at their Meeting in Boston, Sept. 1663,” *Acts*, II: 379-380.

<sup>563</sup> “Letter from Cassacinamon, Daniel, & Catchpoonas,” ICRC, DOC.1663/4-03-15A



Uncas's schemes against Cassacinamon continued in 1664, when the Pequot overseers James Avery and George Denison wrote letters to Governor John Winthrop on Cassacinamon's behalf. According to the overseers, an Indian man named Wathumganit had raped Cassacinamon's wife. Cassacinamon was furious, and demanded that Wathumganit be arrested. However, Wathumganit had fled to the Mohegan country and was given sanctuary by Uncas, before he then moved to the Pawcatuck Pequot community led by Wequashcook aka Cushawashet aka "Harmon Garret."<sup>564</sup> While the sources say that Wathumganit "forced Cassasinimons wife," it is unclear if this was a genuine sexual assault, or a case similar to Obechiquod's in the 1647 petition.<sup>565</sup> However, given that there is no mention of Cassacinamon's wife leaving the community, the evidence leans towards assault. Either way, the fact that both Uncas and Wequashcook sheltered Wathumganit proved telling. Perhaps Wathumganit was kin, or the two sachems may not have wanted to turn over an Algonquian to English justice. Given the personal and political histories of the people involved, it is also possible that Uncas and Wequashcook viewed this as an ideal chance to strike against Cassacinamon.

Given this social and political rivalry, it struck the English as surprising and suspicious that Cassacinamon, Uncas, Ninigret, Wequashcook, and many other Algonquians gathered together at Noank for a "great dance" hosted by the Pequot sachem

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<sup>564</sup>Letter by George Denison explaining problem between Cassacinamon and Harmon Garrit," ICRC, Doc.1664/5-02-17B; "Letter written by James Avery to John Winthrop regarding Pequot complaints," ICRC< DOC.1664/5-02-17C.

<sup>565</sup>July 1647," *Acts*, I: 97-99; Uncas, *Oberg*, 122. In that first Pequot petition, Cassacinamon and Obechiquod claimed Obechiquod's wife was stolen and raped by Uncas, a sign of the unfair abuses the Mohegans inflicted on the Pequots, while the Mohegans said that Obechiquod's wife left of her own free will, a product of the "considerable freedom" that Native women had "when it came to dissolving a union."

in the winter of 1669.<sup>566</sup> Such large gatherings of Natives always made colonials nervous and suspicious. When Connecticut officials heard rumors of an “alleged widespread Indian plot threatening settlements throughout New England,” colonial authorities took notice.<sup>567</sup> Several informants implicated Cassacinamon as a willing conspirator. Thomas Stanton reported “Credebell Indian reprtes heare yt Danyell Robin Sanemanes [Cassacinamon] partner hath bin up w<sup>h</sup> the mowakes [Mohawks] this Spring w<sup>h</sup> a great Sum of wampam and since his returne hath uttered discontent & y thee would Live no Longer under the Inglish but would goe & live under or w<sup>h</sup> the mowakes.” John Mason, in his subsequent report on the incident, confirmed that several of his own sources told him that “the Indians did speedily intend to Cut off[f] the Inglish [English],” a plan “plotted at Robines town at the dance.”<sup>568</sup>

That Cassacinamon hosted this gathering proved that the event had his blessing. Equally suspicious to colonial authorities was the fact that both Uncas and Ninigret attended the dance. As Mason noted, “Nenegrats and Unckas being together at the dans at Robinnes town is and was matter of wonderment to mee,” since as he cynically noted, the two sachems “wod durst not Looke Each upon other this 20 yeares but at the mussel of a Gunn or at the pille of an arrow.”<sup>569</sup> Cassacinamon had his own complicated history with both sachems, so it seemed that only something dangerous would draw these three men together after years of political turmoil. Stanton marched into Noank with soldiers,

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<sup>566</sup>“Petition of Robin Cassasinamon, May 16, 1669,” *RCW*, II: 141a; “July 8, 1669,” *Indian Papers*, I: 10a-d; McBride, “Legacy,” 82; “The Rumored Indian Plot of 1669,” *CR*, II: 548; Oberg, *Uncas*, 161.

<sup>567</sup>McBride, “Legacy,” 82.

<sup>568</sup>*Indian Papers*, I: 10.

<sup>569</sup>*Ibid.*

determined to break up the dance and arrest Ninigret. While Cassacinamon was viewed with suspicion for hosting the gathering, and Uncas was seen as a troublemaker, both leaders benefitted from having well-placed allies within the Connecticut government. The English targeted Ninigret for arrest because of his past insurrection in the 1650s, the “brazen” actions of the Narragansetts in directly petitioning the crown, and the testimony of informants.<sup>570</sup>

What happened next stood as testament to Cassacinamon’s regional influence and political savvy. In a personal statement sent to the Connecticut General Court in May of 1669, Cassacinamon told the authorities his side of the story. He admitted “that Uncas and Ninicraft and a great many other Indians mett together” at Noank. However, he insisted that they intended “no hurt at all to the English,” but gathered “in a place where no[ne] dwell to make a dance after the Indian fashion.”<sup>571</sup> As Stanton’s troops squared off against the Algonquians, Stanton demanded that Cassacinamon help bring Ninigret into custody. However, when Cassacinamon observed the escalating situation, he told the magistrates that “I was much afraid that some men would be kild.” His fears proved justified when “Ninicrafts men, almost one hundred of them have guns in their hands and the English men layd their hands upon their swords redy to draw.” Violence seemed certain, until Cassacinamon “cried out to them” and defused the situation. Afraid that “Ninicraft’s men might have fyred Englishmens houses and that a great dell of hurt might have com of it,” Cassacinamon brokered a peaceful settlement. Cassacinamon refused to help Stanton arrest Ninigret. Instead, he secured his peaceful withdrawal from Noank, at

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<sup>570</sup>“September 1654,” *Acts*, II: 125-134; Oberg, *Uncas*, 161.

<sup>571</sup>“Petition of Robin Cassasinamon, May 16, 1669,” *RCW*, II: 141a.”

the same time he promised to pay Stanton “a great deal of wampum” (some twenty pounds of it). When he offered the wampum, Cassacinamon said it was a fair trade, as “wampum was like the grass when it was gon it would com againe but if men be once kild they will live noe more.”<sup>572</sup> All parties agreed to the settlement and Stanton departed; all that remained of the affair was for colonial authorities to sort out the truth.

Although bloodshed was avoided that day, many questions remained. The Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansetts each defended themselves, and insisted that nothing untoward was planned at the gathering. Ninigret defended his actions, saying that the “informants” were disgruntled Long Island Indians. He dismissed the colonists’ concerns about Cassacinamon’s dance, arguing just as Cassacinamon had done, that such dances were “noe unusauall thing for us soe to doe.” He then claimed that since the Narragansetts had been accepted by the crown as direct subjects, he and his people were “insulated...from the working of Puritan justice.”<sup>573</sup> For his part, John Mason defended his Mohegan allies, arguing that “I cannot yet be pswaded but the Mowhauks and sd Monheage are Cordeall to the English interest.” However, as a gesture of good will, he encouraged Uncas’s son, Owaneco, to surrender some of the Mohegans’ guns to the English. Then, in an attempt to cast aspersions on the Pequots, he challenged “the Pequotts if they will not deliver freely of their owne” guns. Cassacinamon did not rise to Mason’s bait. Some officials remained suspicious of Cassacinamon’s motives, but they decided to trust him. The fact that he had resolved the situation peacefully may well have factored into that decision.<sup>574</sup> The fact that such a suspicious event between longtime

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<sup>572</sup>Ibid.

<sup>573</sup>*RICR*, II: 269-273; *CR*, II: 549-550; Oberg, *Uncas*, 163.

<sup>574</sup>“July 5, 1669,” *Indian Papers*, I: 14; McBride, “Legacy,” 83.

enemies occurred only six years before King Philip's War, suggests that something more than just an ordinary dance had taken place. The irony was that the Natives gathered at the Noank dance — Cassacinamon, Uncas, and Ninigret — were not the ones who eventually threatened the English. In fact, Cassacinamon and Uncas would be crucial in saving them.

The 1669 dance provided definitive proof that Cassacinamon earned the status of a prominent cultural intermediary. The event demonstrated just how entrenched a role the Pequot sachem had carved out for himself in the regional Native political system. If the rumors were true, this event was rooted in Cassacinamon's unhappiness with how his people were being treated, and his desire to live among the Mohawks. On the one hand, this invocation of the Mohawks was a long-standing tactic used by New England Algonquians. However, given Cassacinamon's recent forays into New York, it was possible that he had cultivated connections that made that threat more believable.<sup>575</sup> The fact that Cassacinamon hosted the dance and brought together two mortal enemies, Uncas and Ninigret, indicated that despite whatever personal and political rivalries Cassacinamon had with those men, he had also achieved status and respect among Algonquian leaders in the region. This respect came not only from other Native leaders, but English authorities as well, who listened to Cassacinamon's council and accepted his resolution of the dispute.

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By the time Cassacinamon hosted the "great dance" in 1669, he had become an established fixture in the social, political, and economic networks that crisscrossed the

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<sup>575</sup>*Indian Papers*, I: 15; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 110-115.

Anglo-Algonquian frontier of southern New England. Cassacinamon was a diplomat, translator, sachem, governor, and advocate. His skills as a negotiator and intermediary were evident throughout the 1650s and 1660s, as he formed alliances with English leaders and other Native peoples throughout southern New England and the recently conquered Dutch colony — now New York. Cassacinamon fought in the courts and around the council fires to ensure that the Pequots were protected as the number of English settlers dramatically increased in Connecticut, and as the other Native leaders, like Uncas, also sought to protect what was theirs. Cassacinamon retained copies of important documents, filed petitions, brought lawsuits, signed treaties, requested land surveys, and negotiated agreements, all designed to protect the Pequots' reservations at Noank and Mashantucket. In the process of securing his peoples' lands, Cassacinamon's skills cement his reputation as a prominent cultural intermediary in the region.

The networks that Cassacinamon navigated had, for several decades, kept the Algonquians and the English colonists tied together in a system of interdependence. Neither colonists nor indigenous people exerted full control over the region or over the other side, and since the end of the Pequot War, an uneasy peace had existed. This situation crumbled during the 1660s, as those interdependent networks changed, and the Natives grew more dependent on the English. Once this happened, the balance of power shifted towards the colonials, and the Algonquians had to find creative ways to survive within this new dynamic. For Cassacinamon and Governor John Winthrop Jr., that meant forging an amicable relationship with the royal agents who arrived in the early 1660s. While the Pequots perhaps had more experience dealing with English authority than some of their neighbors, they did not automatically accept this arrangement. Cassacinamon

built upon his relationship with Governor Winthrop, at the same time he fostered ties to the Pequot overseers appointed to work with him, and made overtures to English officials and Native powers in other colonies. However, if the fear over the “Indian dance” of 1669 was any indication, tensions were building to a fateful confrontation. Tensions finally exploded six years later with King Philip’s War.

## Chapter 6: “Remember us to Robbin” - Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and King Philip’s War

In April 1676, an Anglo-Algonquian military force marched east from Connecticut to the Narragansett country. The majority of Narragansetts (minus Ninigret and his followers) now sided with the Wampanoag sachem Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, and joined his Algonquian uprising. The conflict, known to the colonials and their descendents as King Philip’s War, unleashed a level of destruction and death not seen since the Pequot War of 1637. The destruction soon surpassed that earlier conflict.<sup>576</sup> Forty-seven colonial troops entered enemy territory alongside eighty Pequot and Mohegan warriors. The Connecticut Anglo-Algonquian force had orders to stop the Narragansett sachem Canonchet who had destroyed several English settlements. Robin Cassacinamon led the Mashantucket warriors, who fought alongside their kin from the eastern Pawcatuck community. Catazapet, the son of Cassacinamon’s Pawcatuck counterpart Wequashcook/Herman Garrett, commanded this second group of Pequots. Rounding out the Connecticut-Algonquian force was a group of Mohegan warriors led by Owaneco, a son of Cassacinamon’s long-time political opponent Uncas.<sup>577</sup> Whatever

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<sup>576</sup>For works dealing with King Philip’s War, see the following sample of works. Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); James D. Drake, *King Philip’s War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in King Philip’s War* (New York, 1958); Yashuhide Kawashima, *Igniting King Philip’s War: The John Sassamon Murder Trial* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Philip Ranlet, “Another Look at the Causes of King Philip’s War,” in *New England Encounters: Indians and Euroamerican, ca. 1600-1850*, ed. by Alden T. Vaughan (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 136-155; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 282-326.

<sup>577</sup>John William De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut from the earliest known period to 1850* (Hartford, 1851), 282-283; Nathaniel Saltonstall, “A New and Further Narrative of the State of New-



grievances existed between the Pequots, Mohegans, and their English allies were set aside for the mission at hand. Finding the enemy was Cassacinamon's goal, along with seizing whatever spoils he could find in captives, wampum, and material goods.

On April 11, the Connecticut forces found their prey in a swamp near Seaconk, Rhode Island. The tide turned against the Narragansetts, and Canonchet fled. As he sprinted through a brook, his gunlock got wet and was unable to fire. Seeing the opportunity, a Pequot warrior overtook and disarmed Canonchet, and the Narragansett sachem "found himself the prisoner of men whom he had enraged by his desperate and persevering hostility."<sup>578</sup> When the fighting was over, fifty Narragansetts were executed on the spot and another forty, including Canonchet, were taken prisoner. Cassacinamon and the others marched their prize back to Connecticut. In the English town of Stonington, near Pawcatuck, the English, Pequots, and Mohegans decided the Narragansett sachem's fate. Canonchet knew what was coming, and met his end with steely defiance. When Cassacinamon and the others told the Narragansett prisoner he was to be executed, Canonchet told the Native commanders, "It is well. I shall die before my heart is soft." Cassacinamon, Catazapet, and Owaneco then carried out the sentence "in such a manner as would give each tribe...a share in the deed." Cassacinamon shot Canonchet where he stood, ending his life. The Narragansett was dead, but the ritual was not yet done. Owaneco beheaded and quartered Canonchet's lifeless body. Catazapet and the Pequots started a large bonfire and cast the limbs upon it. The three Native

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England being a continued account of the bloody Indian War," in *King Philip's War Narratives* (NY: Readex Microprint Corporation, 1966), 9; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 186.

<sup>578</sup>De Forest, *History*, 283.

leaders then jointly presented Canonchet's head to Captain George Denison as a trophy, which he sent off to the Connecticut magistrates as proof of their victory.<sup>579</sup> With their triumph over Canonchet public for all to see, the Pequots, Mohegans, and English resumed the business of fighting the rest of Philip's forces.

The capture and execution of Canonchet was but one bloody episode in the fourteen month conflict known as King Philip's War. The war fundamentally altered Anglo-Algonquian New England. Since the Pequot War, an uneasy balance had existed between the English colonials and the Algonquian peoples of southern New England. Tensions exploded in 1675 when the Wampanoag sachem Metacom led an Algonquian alliance against the New England colonies and their Algonquian allies. It would be easy to cast the conflict as solely one where English battled Algonquian but, as with the Pequot War, the reality of the situation was far more complicated. Canonchet's execution was but one graphic demonstration of how Natives fought on both sides of the conflict and for their own reasons. As historian Jill Lepore noted, the wounds and words of war generated acts of narration that defined "the geographical, political, cultural, and sometimes racial and national boundaries between peoples."<sup>580</sup> Unlike the aftermath of the Pequot War, King Philip's War did not create an interconnected Anglo-Algonquian world. After 1676, the English secured their dominance of southern New England, and an Anglo-Iroquoian frontier dominated regional politics.

Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots crafted their own "narratives" of the war. For Cassacinamon, the conflagration of 1675-1676 reaffirmed old alliances and

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<sup>579</sup>De Forest, *History*, 283; Saltonstall, "A New and Further Narrative," 9; Oberg, *Uncas*, 186.

<sup>580</sup>Lepore, *The Name of War*, x.

created new ones, and forced concessions from colonial officials who once again needed his help. After decades spent integrating themselves into the fabric of Anglo-Algonquian relations, the strategies employed by Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots protected them from the worst of the war. For a brief time, this arrested the tightening grip of English control. The Mashantucket Pequots strengthened their standing in the region, and reaped material benefits in the form of captives and wampum. King Philip's War was, in the words of scholar James D. Drake, "a civil war" that destroyed the previous Anglo-Algonquian New England society.<sup>581</sup> Yet, the tactics, alliances, and strategies employed by Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots protected them from these changes, just as they had for decades.

## I

By the early 1670s, estimates put the regional population of New England at around 78,000 people, one out of every four people being indigenous. In this Anglo-Algonquian world, it was common practice for local and regional Algonquian and colonial leaders to enter their communities "into voluntary, sometimes overlapping, coalitions of perceived common political interests."<sup>582</sup> Cassacinamon, Uncas, John Winthrop Jr., John Mason, and countless others spent decades doing just that. Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots had carved out a place for themselves in the changing social and political world of southern New England. Colonial leaders classified Native groups that lived outside the English colonies as "nations," and those

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<sup>581</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 2.

<sup>582</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-17. For a detailed study of the intricate socio-political relationships forged by Native leaders in seventeenth century New England, see Eric Spencer Johnson's well-crafted and researched dissertation. Eric Spencer Johnson, "'Some by Flatteries and Others by Threatenings': Political Strategies among Native Americans of Seventeenth-Century Southern New England," Ph.D. dissertation, Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1993.

that lived within colonial boundaries as “subjects.” “Subject” was a loose classification however. In the minds of many colonial officials, Natives living within colonial borders (such as Uncas and the Mohegans) remained stubbornly independent. Historian Alden Vaughan developed a three-part classification system for those Natives residing within colonial boundaries: groups that “maintained their independence from the English” (like the Mohegans), groups “that nominally subjected themselves to the English (like the Pequots), and “those individual Indians who lacked affiliation with any Indian group and lived within English communities.”<sup>583</sup> The “nominal” part of Vaughan’s second category is critical in understanding Cassacinamon’s and the Pequots’ status. Cassacinamon’s friendship/alliance with Governor John Winthrop Jr. granted the community access to the highest levels of colonial government. The sachem and his lieutenants navigated the turbulent waters of the English legal system in defending their rights. The Pequots replicated their seasonal subsistence rounds by traveling between their reservations at Noank and Mashantucket; at the same time, they took part in the larger colonial market economy.<sup>584</sup> The Pequots were no longer scattered survivors, they were acknowledged political agents with a land base from which to operate. Under Cassacinamon’s guidance the Pequots reestablished themselves as a permanent Native presence in the region, with a defined role in regional politics.

Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots were better equipped to handle the changes of the 1660s and early 1670s than other Native communities. The

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<sup>583</sup>Ibid., 38; Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: English and Indians, 1620-1675* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), 188-190; Yasuhide Kawashima, *English Justice and the Indian: White Man’s Law in Massachusetts, 1630-1763* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986).

<sup>584</sup>Kevin A. McBride, “The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period,” in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 86.

demonetization of wampum, the seizure of New Netherlands/New York, the efforts of the Restoration royal government to assert its authority over New England, and the increased importance of the Mohawks to the fur trade and to frontier relations, all put the southern New England Algonquians under augmented pressures. Coupled with these changes was the inescapable fact that the English colonial population continued to grow. Between 1650 and 1670, their population doubled, causing rapid expansion and the establishment of new settlements in previously “undeveloped” areas. By 1665, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Maine combined held over thirty English towns, while Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth possessed nearly fifty towns.<sup>585</sup> One of the beleaguered Native groups that faced these increased pressures was the Wampanoags living near Plymouth colony. The Wampanoags were led by the sachem Metacom (Philip), a man with an extensive history with the English. However, Metacom could not navigate the negative trends of the 1660s and 1670s as effectively as the Pequot sachem.

In June 1675, Plymouth authorities tried, convicted, and executed three Wampanoag men — important councilors of Metacom’s — for the murder of a Massachusetts Christian Indian named John Sassamon. By the end of June, Metacom’s warriors had attacked the Plymouth town of Swansea, the first of many towns put to the

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<sup>585</sup>Lincoln A. Dexter, *Maps of Early Massachusetts: Pre-History Through the Seventeenth Century* (Springfield, MA: Dexter, 1979), 71, 89; Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1993, republished from 1932), 9, 13; Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 173; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 219-220; Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 169; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 72; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 152-153; Neal Salisbury, “The Colonizing of Indian New England,” *Massachusetts Review* 26 (1985): 456; Lynn Ceci, “The First Fiscal Crisis in New York,” *Economic Development and Culture Change* 28 (1980): 839-847; Evarts B. Greene, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790* (Gloucester, MA: 1966), 9.

torch.<sup>586</sup> The Sassamon trial and its aftermath supplied the sparks that ignited the war, but the groundwork had been laid years before. Anglo-Algonquian relations in Connecticut were often complicated, and at times contentious, but the importance of Natives like Cassacinamon to the security of the colony had forced English authorities there to deal with them in a diplomatic, though by no means perfect, manner. Through years of skillful negotiations and dealings, Cassacinamon had secured the friendships and partnerships of the most powerful Englishmen in the Connecticut colony. Metacom was not as fortunate. In the years leading up to the war, Metacom/Philip — the grandson of Massasoit, the Indian leader famous for his peace with the Pilgrims — found himself cut off from potential English allies. This isolation recalled the Pequots' experience prior to the outbreak of the Pequot War in 1637.<sup>587</sup> Politically, Metacom's difficult relationship with English authorities contrasted sharply with Cassacinamon's shrewd relationship with them. While both sachems dealt with similar historical forces, Cassacinamon's astute understanding of the English political system and his personal relationship with John Winthrop Jr., provided Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots with critical protections denied to Metacom.

From the 1650s to the 1670s, the Wampanoags battled Plymouth Plantation, Massachusetts Bay, and Rhode Island over land rights, fencing, and grazing animals. However, their contentious relationship with Plymouth dominated Wampanoag politics.<sup>588</sup> In 1662, Metacom became Wampanoag grand sachem after his brother

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<sup>586</sup>Ranlet, "Another Look," 146-149; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 101-102.

<sup>587</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 109.

<sup>588</sup>William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (1677), ed. Samuel G. Drake, 2 vols., in I (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), 46-47; Nathaniel B. Shurtleff and

Wamsutta died. In one of his first acts, he declared Plymouth his protectorate, or his *nanauwunnumoonkan*.<sup>589</sup> At first, the relationship benefited Metacom; the colony aided him in removing intrusive Narragansetts who threatened his power.<sup>590</sup> However, despite these early reaffirmations of friendship, over the next thirteen years Metacom battled colonial officials in the courts and in treaty negotiations to protect his people and their land. Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay and the Narragansetts beset Metacom from all sides. Periods of high tension emanated from frequent rumors that Metacom secretly planned insurrections against the colonists. The first of these rumored plots emerged in 1667. However, once it was revealed that the plot was based on deliberate misinformation by some of Metacom's Native enemies, the matter was settled.<sup>591</sup>

In April 1671, Plymouth Colony demanded that Metacom answer new charges that he conspired against them. These rumors surfaced after several of Metacom's followers had marched through the town of Swansea the previous March, brandishing their weapons at the English settlers. Plymouth had established Swansea in 1667, around the time the previous rumors surrounded Metacom. The closest English town to Metacom's own village, Swansea served as another sign of English encroachment.<sup>592</sup> In

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David Pulsifer, eds., *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, 12 vols. (Boston: William White, 1855-1861), 3: 167, 192 (Hereafter *PCR*); John Cotton to Increase Mather, 20 March 1676/77, *The Mather Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 4<sup>th</sup> series 8 (1868): 233-234 (Hereafter *MHSC*); Betty Groff Schroeder, "The True Lineage of King Philip (Sachem Metacom)," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 144 (1990): 211-214 (Hereafter *NEHGR*); Ranlet, "Another Look," 137-149; Pulsifer, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 103.

<sup>589</sup>*PCR*, 4:25-26; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 64; Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1975), 291-292; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 115.

<sup>590</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 65.

<sup>591</sup>*PCR*, 4: 164-165; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 65

contrast to the (mostly) reciprocal relationship between the Pequots living at Noank/Mashantucket and the residents of New London, Connecticut, the proximity of Swansea to Metacom did not cement an easy peace. Plymouth colonists frequently angered the Wampanoags; increased economic hardships, the destruction of Wampanoag fields by English livestock, and colonial desire for Wampanoag lands were common sources of tension. Throughout the 1660s, the Wampanoags worked with English authorities and took their grievances to Plymouth's courts. Plymouth officials made half-hearted efforts to address the problems, but colonial expansion continued with little thought to Wampanoag concerns.<sup>593</sup>

These issues affected relationships between the Pequots and New London as well, but they also shared a lengthy history of cooperation due to the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance. Metacom had received approval from the royal commissioners in 1665, but this did not protect him from the colonial advance. And although Protestant missionaries made overtures to the Pequots, Metacom faced a challenge that Cassacinamon did not: the Christian Indians of the "Praying Towns." The first "Praying Town, Natick, was founded in 1651, by Puritan missionary John Eliot. Designed to teach not only the Gospel but English "civilization," the towns drew numerous Algonquians to them for a variety of reasons. Many settled in these towns as a way to rebuild their communities wracked by disease and dislocation; some expressed genuine interest in what the missionaries offered; others went for person reasons that they kept to themselves. By 1675, fourteen "Praying Towns" had been established, with 2,500 Algonquians — nearly

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<sup>592</sup>*PCR*, 4: 169, 176; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 66.

<sup>593</sup>The damage to Native agricultural fields was so rampant that the Plymouth General Court tasked men in each settlement "to view the damage done to the Indians by the Horses and Hoggs of the English." "June 5, 1671," *PCR*, 5: 62; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 153; Ranlet, "Another Look," 137-149.



20 percent of southern New England Natives — calling the towns home. These towns posed a challenge to leaders like Metacom, as they drew individuals from established tribes and confederations into these new social arrangements. Though Metacom expressed no interest in conversion our in joining these “Praying Towns,” Eliot and other missionaries desired to convert the sachem and the other Wampanoags. As these social, political, and economic pressures mounted, Metacom’s resistance grew more entrenched, even as his options grew more limited.<sup>594</sup>

After the March 1671 display, Metacom met with Plymouth officials in the town of Taunton. When Plymouth authorities asked if he planned an insurrection, Metacom admitted that he was prepared for a fight. Nothing of substance was resolved, but on April 10, 1671, Metacom signed a treaty whereby he agreed to turn over his guns. While Plymouth magistrates expected him to turn over *all* his guns, Metacom just handed over the weapons he brought with him to Taunton. He had others.<sup>595</sup> By June, Plymouth had

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<sup>594</sup>Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England*, MHSC, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 180-200; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 72-76, 78. Four Praying Towns survived the war. For closer examinations of the various cultural, social, and material reasons Indians chose to settle in the Praying Towns, see the following works. Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 303-304; Francis Jennings, “Goals and Functions of Puritan Missions to the Indians,” in *Ethnohistory* 18, 3 (Summer 1971): 197-212, as well as *Invasion*, 233-234, 238-239, 242, 245-252, 277; Neil Salisbury, “Red Puritans,” ; Elise Brenner, “To Pray or Be Prey: That is the Question. Strategies for Cultural Autonomy of Massachusetts Praying Indians,” in *Ethnohistory* 27 (Spring 1980): 135-152; James Ronda, “We Are Well as We Are: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions,” in *WMQ* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, (January 1977), 34: 67-82, as well as “Generations of Faith: The Christian Indians of Martha’s Vineyard,” in *WMQ* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, (July 1981), 38: 369-394; Harold Van Lonkhuyzen, “A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646-1730,” in *NEQ* (September 1990) 63: 396-428; Richard W. Cogley, “Idealism vs. Materialism in the Study of Puritan Missions to the Indians” in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 3, 2 (1991): 165-182, as well as *John Eliot’s Mission to the Indians Before King Philip’s War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Charles L. Cohen, “Conversion Among Puritans and Amerindians: A Theological and Cultural Perspective,” in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993); James Axtell, “Were Indian Conversions *Bona Fide?*,” in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

charged Metacom with violating the agreement, and Eliot convinced Metacom and Plymouth to appeal for arbitration. On September 24, 1671, John Winthrop Jr., John Leverett of Massachusetts Bay, and other representatives from the United Colonies gathered with Metacom and his councilors at Plymouth. While the arbitrators stressed that Plymouth should follow a “moderate” course of action, they clearly sided with Plymouth. Winthrop’s actions made it clear that while he protected his friend Cassacinamon, he withheld his favor from those Natives not-essential to his plans. The arbitrators found Metacom totally at fault, and ordered him “to amend his wayes, if hee expected peace, and that if hee went on in his refractory way, he must expect to smart for it.”<sup>596</sup> On September 29, 1671, Metacom was forced to accept an imposed treaty and pay a £100 fine within three years. Forcibly made a subject of Plymouth colony, he agreed not to sell land or go to war with other tribes without first obtaining the colony’s permission.<sup>597</sup> Cassacinamon and the Pequots had chosen direct affiliation with the English over the Mohegans because it suited their own interests: the right to live in their own territory with their own Pequot leaders. Metacom’s forced subjugation to Plymouth did nothing to further his own objectives. It proved a symbol of everything that had gone wrong for the Wampanoags.

Metacom may have accepted nominal subjugation to Plymouth, but that did not mean Plymouth *actually controlled* the surrounding frontier. Metacom raised the money to pay the fine by selling land. The loss of land was bitter for the Wampanoag sachem,

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<sup>595</sup>“June 5, 1671,” *PCR*, 5:63-64; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 153.

<sup>596</sup>*PCR*, 5:77-79; Ranlet, “Another Look,” 145.

<sup>597</sup>John Easton, *A Relacion of the Indyan Warre* [1675], in Charles H. Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699* (New York: Scribner’s, 1913), 9; “August 23, 1671,” *PCR*, 5: 77-79; Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 66-67; Lepore, *In the Name of War*, 39-40; Ranlet, “Another Look,” 143-145; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 153-154.

but the proceeds did more than settle the debt. He had plenty of money left over to purchase more guns. The legal disputes also grew more contentious. Natives filed court claims in such numbers that in 1673, Plymouth banned Indians from town when court was held save for the July and October sessions.<sup>598</sup> By 1675, only the right set of circumstances were needed to trigger the violence.

The Wampanoag sachem faced opposition from Native leaders as well as colonials. Cassacinamon's old opponent, the Narragansett-Niantic sachem Ninigret, was one of these foes. The Christian Indian John Sassamon was another. Each challenged Metacom's authority.<sup>599</sup> Ninigret, denied satisfaction in Connecticut, turned towards the Wampanoags in an attempt to shore up his own power base and remove Metacom as a rival. Ninigret spread the 1667 rumors about Metacom.<sup>600</sup> Ninigret's use of misinformation was a well-worn political strategy, as well as casting about rumors of "Indian plots." Such rumors always triggered fear among the English, and opportunistic sachems channeled that fear to their advantage.<sup>601</sup> Cassacinamon employed this tactic himself, as did Uncas, but Metacom was not as astute with it.

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<sup>598</sup>PCR, 5: 77-79, 97-98, 101, 106-107, 180; William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England* (1677), ed. Samuel G. Drake, 2 volumes (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), I: 58; James P. Ronda, "Red and White at the Bench: Indians and the Law in Plymouth Colony, 1620-1691," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 110 (1974): 210-211; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 154.

<sup>599</sup>For a more detailed look at the ongoing crisis Metacom faced see the following works. Lepore, *The Name of War*, 21-47; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 57-73; Ranlet, "Another Look," 136-149; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 151-154.

<sup>600</sup>Ninigret's use of misinformation as a political strategy is in keeping with Johnson's analysis of the tactic. PCR, 4: 164-165; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 65; Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 108-110.

<sup>601</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 109.

Metacom faced a far more personal challenge from the Christian Indian John Sassamon.<sup>602</sup> Sassamon was a Massachusetts Indian who as a young teen was raised in an English household after his birth parents died. They converted to Puritan Christianity shortly before their deaths, and Sassamon continued his spiritual conversion while living with his new English family. He had an ongoing (though fitful) relationship with Calvinism throughout his life.<sup>603</sup> Years spent living among the English was an experience shared by both Sassamon and Cassacinamon. Sassamon learned to read and write as well.<sup>604</sup> These skills made him a cultural intermediary like Cassacinamon, and Sassamon emerged as a trusted Native translator for the English. Sassamon stepped on to the regional stage by working with the colonists in the Pequot War. Sassamon, like Uncas and Miantonomi, made sure he was well-compensated for his services. “Compensation” came in the form of a Pequot woman, who likely became his wife.<sup>605</sup>

Sassamon’s linguistic skills and his Puritan faith made him the ideal partner for missionary John Eliot in his efforts to both learn indigenous languages and convert Native Americans. Sassamon worked closely with Eliot for years; both men were well-known as interpreters, linguists, and teachers, and Sassamon was one of several Natives who helped Eliot craft his bilingual Bible, Indian primer, and two books of Psalms. Sassamon even served as a teacher in the Massachusetts/Wampanoag praying town of

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<sup>602</sup>For a thorough biography of Sassamon, see Jill Lepore’s work *The Name of War*. Lepore, *The Name of War*, 28-44.

<sup>603</sup>Lepore, *The Name of War*, 30-31.

<sup>604</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>605</sup>Ibid., 28-29.

Natick in 1650, and attended Harvard in 1653.<sup>606</sup> By 1654 Sassamon's relationship with Eliot grew strained due to Sassamon's ongoing struggles living up to English "standards" of conversion. However, Sassamon's skills still made him a valuable asset. In 1662, Sassamon entered Metacom's circle of counselors as an interpreter and scribe.<sup>607</sup> Francis Jennings and others have suggested that Sassamon worked as a spy for Plymouth Colony, and funneled vital information to them about Metacom. If true, this strengthens the parallels between Sassamon and Cassacinamon: both men used their multilingual abilities and cross-cultural connections to manipulate information to their own advantage.<sup>608</sup>

For a time, Sassamon served as a critical link between the Wampanoags and the English. Both sides viewed him in different ways: Eliot saw him as a vehicle by which to convert Metacom, and Metacom saw him as an important ally in dealing with the English. However, by 1671 Sassamon had fallen out of favor with both Metacom and Eliot. Eliot blamed him for not doing enough to convert Metacom, while Metacom increasingly viewed Sassamon as an untrustworthy rival. First, Sassamon gave Metacom false information regarding the whereabouts of several of Metacom's Narragansett enemies.<sup>609</sup> Then, Metacom discovered that Sassamon, in his capacity as scribe, tried to

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<sup>606</sup>John Eliot, *Strength out of Weakness; or a Glorious Manifestation of the further Progress of the gospel among the Indians in New-England* (London, 1652); reprinted in *MHSC*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 4 (1834): 169-170; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 32. For a closer examination of the Indians besides Sassamon who worked with Eliot and other missionaries, individuals such as Cockenoe, Nesuton, James the Printer, Hiacoomes, Joel, and Caleb, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies: 1607-1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 101-128.

<sup>607</sup>Lepore, *The Name of War*, 38-40; Jennings, *Invasion*, 294.

<sup>608</sup>Jennings, *Invasion*, 294; Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, 31.

<sup>609</sup>James Walker to Governor Prince, September 1, 1671, *MHSC*, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 6 (1799): 197-198; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 41; Jennings, *Invasion*, 294-295.

cheat him. Sassamon included a sizable land grant to *himself* in Metacom will.<sup>610</sup> Sassamon left Metacom, and lived among the English and Christian Indians at Nemsaket after that, where he served as a minister to the Christian Indians there. In 1674, Sassamon returned to the Wampanoags, in what some felt was a renewed attempt to convert Metacom and establish a new relationship with the sachem. However, in January 1675, Sassamon met with Plymouth governor Josiah Winslow to tell him that Metacom once again plotted against the English. Governor Winslow, in spite of the ongoing disputes with Philip, discounted Sassamon's information "because it had an Indian original, and one can hardly believe them [even] when they speak truth."<sup>611</sup> Sassamon disappeared within a week of meeting Winslow; his body was found in February 1675. Metacom was an immediate suspect, but ultimately three of his counselors — Tobias, Tobias's son Wampapaquan, and Mattashunannamo — were arrested, tried and convicted for the murder. The three were executed on June 8, 1675. By June 11, Metacom's warriors were seen arming themselves outside Plymouth "in a posture of war." On June 23, two colonists killed a Wampanoag Indian on the outskirts of Swansea. The next day, the Wampanoags attacked Swansea, killing nine colonists. When a lunar eclipse darkened the skies on June 26, 1675, it seemed to both Algonquian and English alike an omen of things to come.<sup>612</sup> The war had begun.

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<sup>610</sup>c A Relation of the Indyan Warre by Mr. Easton, of Roade ISLD," in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: 1941), 7; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 154; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 42; Jennings, *Invasion*, 294-295.

<sup>611</sup>Winslow and Hinckley, "Narrative," 362; Mather, *Relation*, 74-75; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 21.

<sup>612</sup>PCR, 5: 167; Saltonstall, *Present State*, 25; "Relation of the Indyan Warre," 12; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 154-155; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 22-23; Jennings, *Invasion*, 295-297.

It is unclear whether Cassacinamon knew the Wampanoag sachem, the Christian Massachusetts interpreter, or any of the Wampanoags who were executed. Given the political climate of Anglo-Algonquian southern New England and the run-ins Metacom had with Winthrop and Ninigret, it is likely that Cassacinamon knew Metacom at least by reputation. It is also unclear what, if any, knowledge the Pequot sachem had of John Sassamon, or if he had any strong reactions to his murder. Due to Sassamon's involvement in the Pequot War and his taking of a Pequot woman after the conflict, it is doubtful Cassacinamon shed any tears over his death.

Striking comparisons can be made between Robin Cassacinamon's story and those of Metacom and Sassamon. Like Metacom, Cassacinamon led a community of Algonquians connected to a neighboring English colony. And like Sassamon, Cassacinamon was a skilled interpreter and intermediary whose abilities put him at the center of diplomacy and the exchange of information. Yet in comparing the three men, Cassacinamon's true skills as a leader and player in regional politics are made clear. Metacom led the Wampanoags, but his constant political setbacks with Plymouth and the lack of a dependable English ally left him vulnerable to the machinations of his neighbors, both English and Algonquian. Cassacinamon was determined not to face a similar fate. As the Sassamon murder trial unfolded in Plymouth's court, in May 1675 Connecticut officials and Cassacinamon met in Hartford and agreed upon a set of laws to govern the Pequots.<sup>613</sup> Ever since 1654, the Commissioners of the United Colonies and Connecticut colony had reserved the right to appoint governors and overseers for the Pequots. Colonial officials also encouraged the Pequots to follow "proper" laws that

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<sup>613</sup>"Laws for the Pequot, 1675," J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), II: 574 (Hereafter *CR*).

regulated their behavior. This authority was acknowledged throughout the 1660s in the petitions and agreements that secured the Mashantucket reservation.<sup>614</sup> Cassacinamon received his official English appointments as Pequot “governor,” but the office simply reinforced his Native qualifications as sachem. Yet even after the more contentious incidents of the late 1660s, such as Cassacinamon’s Indian dance of 1669, the English did not force Cassacinamon to revisit this matter of law.<sup>615</sup> The Wampanoag crisis facilitated such a return, which Cassacinamon exploited to his own advantage.

The timing of these laws cannot be dismissed as coincidence. With colonial leaders casting worried eyes towards Plymouth, Connecticut magistrates needed some assurance that their borders were secure. Cassacinamon seized the moment to strengthen his alliance with the colony. In May 1675, Cassacinamon sent a petition to the Connecticut General Court and asked that “some laws & orders” be drawn up “for the present well governing of the Pequitt Indians.” The laws included penalties for crimes like murder and theft, but many of them focused on converting the Pequots to English modes of civilization. There were laws about adultery, abiding the Sabbath, and requiring Pequots to attend services by Reverend James Fitch and any other missionaries who worked with the community.<sup>616</sup> Given the fact that Cassacinamon never converted

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<sup>614</sup>These regulations made murder and witchcraft capital crimes, while others attempted to modify Pequot behavior. They were to obey the Sabbath, not commit blasphemy, not commit adultery, and renounce alcohol and theft. Any Pequots that joined unauthorized war parties or who plotted against the English would be severely punished. “September 1656,” *Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England, Volume II, 1653-1679*, in *Plymouth Colonial Records*, Vol. X (Boston: William White, 1859; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1968), II: 142-143 (Hereafter *Acts*); “September 1664,” *Acts*, II: 319; “May 10, 1666,” *CR*, II: 36, 39; “Petition of Pequot Indians, October 16, 1654,” *Robert C Winthrop Collection*, Connecticut State Archives (Hartford, CT), 2: 149a-d (Hereafter *RCW*); De Forest, *History*, 246-248.

<sup>615</sup>“Petition of Robin Cassacinamon, May 16, 1669,” *Robert C. Winthrop Manuscript Collection*, Connecticut State Archives, II: 141a (Hereafter *RCW*); “The Rumored Indian Plot of 1669,” *CR*, II: 548.



to Christianity in his lifetime, and that English efforts at “civilizing” the Pequots were not successful during the seventeenth century, the likelihood is that these cultural laws were not closely enforced. However, the laws did offer additional protections to the Pequots. They bound the Pequots to the colony at a time when trust was an especially important commodity in Anglo-Algonquian relations.

Several prominent Connecticut officials signed the agreement, including Lt. Governor William Leete and John Allyn, but one key signature was absent: John Winthrop Jr’s. While Winthrop Jr. was still Connecticut governor, by 1675 he was scaling back his governmental activities. He had to be convinced by the council to take on another term as governor; but at sixty-nine years old, Winthrop Jr. was increasingly focused on more personal matters of health, family, and finance.<sup>617</sup> By negotiating this agreement with other members of the Connecticut government, Cassacinamon established connections with the colonial hierarchy independent of his relationship with the Winthrops. From an Algonquian standpoint, it strengthened the relationship between a principal sachem and a member of its confederation. John Winthrop Jr. did not oppose this strategy, since it furthered his overall goal of allying the Pequots with the English. The escalating tensions with Metacom concerned Winthrop, as did a renewed border dispute with New York.<sup>618</sup> In this tense environment, this proactive move by Cassacinamon was a welcomed gesture by Connecticut leaders.

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<sup>616</sup>“Laws for the Pequot, 1675,” *CR*, II: 575-576.

<sup>617</sup>“Laws for the Pequot, 1675,” *CR*, II: 576; Robert C. Black, III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 339.

<sup>618</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 88, 97-105; Black, *Younger John Winthrop*, 339-345.

The Pequot laws of 1675 also provided Cassacinamon with important personal benefits. By proposing the agreement himself, Cassacinamon demonstrated he was an Indian leader Connecticut authorities could deal with in a “reasonable” manner. Recognizing that the Pequot sachem/governor “appeared to be faythfull in his trust under the Com<sup>ts</sup>, and hitherto under this Gouverment,” the orders reaffirmed his position of authority as well as that of his “second or cheife counselor” Daniel. The laws made the same arrangement for Cassacinamon’s Pawcatuck counterpart Herman Garrett and his lieutenant, a Pequot by the name of Mamaho. Further, the laws confirmed that the sachems/governors retained the power to appoint “constables” who would serve as councilors and help keep peace within the community. Added to this, every Indian male over the age of sixteen was to “yearely pay unto the principall officer to which he belongs, the sume of five shillings in currant Indian pay.” This tribute was for the sachems’ “encouragement & support in their faythfull discharge of their duty and trust,” with the chief councilors (Daniel and Mamaho) of each sachem receiving a tribute of their own, one third of what the sachem/governors received.<sup>619</sup> These tributes, and the use of councilors, were established features of Algonquian political systems; sachems often received such offerings from their communities through a system of mutual obligation and reciprocity.<sup>620</sup> The Connecticut authorities reaffirmed elements of the pre-existing Algonquian leadership. However, by recognizing two Pequot governors, the

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<sup>619</sup>“Laws for the Pequot, 1675,” *CR*, II: 575.

<sup>620</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 71-73, 78, 85; Oberg, *Uncas*, 22-24

arrangement once again enforced the legal separation of the two Pequot communities: Mashantucket/Noank and Pawcatuck.<sup>621</sup>

Eager to secure its Indian allies, the Connecticut colony negotiated with the Pequots. However, not even this need for Pequot allies forced the English to accept an official merging of the two Pequot groups at Mashantucket and Pawcatuck. However, the fact that Cassacinamon initiated the deal and took the lead in the negotiations suggests that, once again, he spoke as the main Pequot authority. He demonstrated that he had powerful English allies on his side who supported his authority among the Pequots.<sup>622</sup>

In the midst of Metacom's political crisis, Cassacinamon devised an opportunity to shore up his own power and the security of his people. Cassacinamon had integrated himself and the Pequots into the political fabric of the Connecticut-Algonquian frontier. While his relationship with Connecticut was at times difficult, it also produced tangible benefits for both the Pequots and the English. Metacom could not convince the English that they needed him as a partner in order to keep the peace; they merely saw him as an obstacle to their expansionist endeavors. He was soon beset on all sides by English colonists and other Natives seeking his land. Since the office of sachem depended on lineage *and* ability, if Metacom could not meet these challenges he had no guarantee his people would follow him. Coupled with this weakness, Metacom proved unable to master information and misinformation as a diplomatic tactic, which left him at a severe

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<sup>621</sup>“Order for Resettling the Pequots, with Enclosure, October 23, 1654,” *The Winthrop Papers, Volume 6, 1650-1654*, ed. Malcolm Freiberg (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), 6: 466 (Hereafter *WP*).

<sup>622</sup> As Eric Spencer Johnson noted, relying on English allies to legitimize their authority was a tactic often used by sachems. Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 123.

political and personal disadvantage. Unlike Metacom, Cassacinamon had mastered these techniques, and reaffirmed his people's place in Connecticut's Anglo-Algonquian frontier.

Comparisons between Cassacinamon and John Sassamon suggest similar contrasts. Sassamon's linguistic and literary skills made him indispensable, but both colonial and Algonquians also perceived him as a threat. Individuals who crossed these various English and Algonquian worlds often had suspicions cast on their intentions. General distrust of interpreters, despite the fact their essential role in political life on the frontier, reflected this precarious fluidity. Cultural intermediaries walked this socio-political tight rope at various times throughout their lives. Once the war began, Indian interpreters faced even greater suspicion. In September 1675, John Allyn warned John Winthrop Jr.'s son Fitz-John Winthrop to "beware of having any linguist in your company, least he so hide himself as that you leave him behind you!"<sup>623</sup> This warning is odd, given the Winthrop family's lengthy relationship with Cassacinamon. However, unlike John Sassamon, Cassacinamon had long relied on a Native powerbase and influential English allies to support his endeavors. Both Cassacinamon and John Sassamon used their abilities to act as a nexus of information on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier. Yet their own political ambitions also made them targets. The critical difference was that Cassacinamon, as a sachem *and* as an interpreter, was also deeply connected to the social and political networks of the region. Cassacinamon had served as the bridge between Uncas and the Pequots, and with John Winthrop Jr. as his advocate, none of Cassacinamon's Native opponents could risk eliminating him. When

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<sup>623</sup>John Allyn to Fitz-John Winthrop, September 20, 1675, *MHSC*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 3 (1889): 449; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 43.

Cassacinamon finally secured a permanent land base and official ties with the English, he paired his interpretive skills with his political alliances in such a way that forced his Native opponents to acknowledge him as a regional player.<sup>624</sup> None of the relationships Sassamon formed with the “Praying Indians,” John Eliot, and Metacom generated links as permanent as Cassacinamon’s in the Algonquian socio-political power structure.

The inability of Metacom and John Sassamon to integrate themselves into the political fabric of the Anglo-Algonquian frontier left both men vulnerable to the social, political, and economic changes of the 1660s and early 1670s. Cassacinamon drew upon his dual roles as sachem and intermediary and avoided similar damage. The failure of Metacom, Sassamon, and Plymouth to negotiate a workable peace was a disaster waiting to happen. The violence of Sassamon’s murder, the execution of Metacom’s men, and the attack on Swansea soon spread outside Plymouth and engulfed the region. In the summer of 1675, the most deadly conflict per capita in American history began in earnest.<sup>625</sup>

## II

After the Swansea raid, Metacom’s forces attacked the neighboring villages of Rehoboth and Taunton, the site of his previous humiliation. The attacks continued throughout July 1675, and Metacom’s warriors razed towns throughout Plymouth. Dozens of colonial homes were burned to the ground, and the warriors killed “many people after a most barbarous manner; as skinning them all alive, some only their heads,

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<sup>624</sup>Margaret Connell-Szasz, ed., *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 3, 6, 21-23; Oberg, *Uncas*, 104-107.

<sup>625</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 173.

cutting off their hands and feet.”<sup>626</sup> With each successful raid, more and more Algonquians joined Metacom’s cause. The fighting broke outside the boundary of Wampanoag-Plymouth when Nipmuck warriors attacked the town of Mendon in central Massachusetts Bay, thirty-two miles from Boston. Metacom’s envoys to central Massachusetts and to the Connecticut River Valley were well-received by many Algonquians in those areas, people pushed to the brink by colonial abuses.<sup>627</sup> Throughout the summer and fall, Metacom’s forces attacked English towns throughout Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. By September and October, Metacom’s forces raided towns in the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>628</sup>

Metacom’s warriors blended elements of English military culture with more traditional Native martial tactics and weapons, another sign of just how enmeshed English and Algonquian society had become over the course of the seventeenth-century.<sup>629</sup> The colonials had a long-standing fear of what they called the Indians’ “skulking way of war.” Metacom’s forces preferred raids and hit-and-run tactics and avoided direct confrontations unless they were confident of winning.<sup>630</sup> Metacom’s

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<sup>626</sup>Saltonstall, “The Present State of New England,” *King Philip’s War Narratives*, 4.

<sup>627</sup>Ibid.; Oberg, *Uncas*, 173.

<sup>628</sup>Lepore, *The Name of War*, xx; Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 84-86. Towns like Middleborough, Dartmouth, Mendon, Brookfield, and Lancaster all fell before Metacom’s forces. The seeming inability of the colonials to counter the Algonquian attacks only emboldened Metacom’s warriors. The colonials proved slow to adapt their battle techniques to the realities of Indian war and the hit-and-run tactics of the Algonquians. Colonials abandoned three of these settlements — Deerfield, Brookfield, and Northfield — for more than a decade after the war.

<sup>629</sup>Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 88; Oberg, *Uncas*, 173.

<sup>630</sup>“William Leete to John Winthrop Jr., September 23, 1675,” *MHSC*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 7 (1865): 579; Patrick M. Malone, *The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 63; Oberg, *Uncas*, 173. Lt. Governor William Leete of Connecticut noted that “it was hardly feasible to extirpate [the Indians] in an ordinary way, they being so cunning in a skulking, ambuscade maner, to take advantage of the woods, & so accurate markes men, abouve our men, to doe execution.”

forces attacked the visible manifestations of English property and identity: homes, fences, livestock, and persons all fell before the warriors.<sup>631</sup> The Algonquians used both Native and English weapons with great efficiency: bows and arrows, tomahawks, and flintlock muskets. But perhaps the most devastating weapon used during the conflict was fire. After the burning of Mystic fort, Natives were shocked at the brutal deployment of fire as a weapon of war. But during King Philip's War, previous notions of restraint were tossed aside in favor of "a high-casualty form of total warfare."<sup>632</sup>

The long-dreaded "Indian conspiracy" had finally erupted. The colonials' own actions in bringing that fear to life were ignored by most, though not all, New Englanders. In a rare display of unity, the United Colonies and Rhode Island joined together to face Metacom.<sup>633</sup> Towns and settlements closest to indigenous-controlled areas being the most susceptible to Indian attacks urged a moderate course of action. As the fighting intensified, that restraint burned away along with many settlements.<sup>634</sup> At the governmental level, Connecticut and Rhode Island also stressed moderation. Distanced from most of the intense fighting, their main concern was keeping the Pequots,

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<sup>631</sup>As Jill Lepore noted in her analysis of King Philip's War, Metacom's warriors attacked the bodies and bounded systems of English authority with precision and fury. Lepore, *The Name of War*, 74, 79, 95-96.

<sup>632</sup>Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 2, 35, 59, 74-75, 78-82, 84, 96; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 89; Hirsch, "The Collision of Military Cultures," 187-212.

<sup>633</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 78-80; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 109. That the New England colonies worked together at all was impressive given the divisions that existed between them, even during the war. While contributing troops and Indian warriors to the cause, Connecticut was also battling New York in a border dispute. In fact, during the war, Governor Andros of New York tried unsuccessfully to seize Saybrook. And although the New England colonies agreed to battle Philip, at one point Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay embargoed each other's trade goods.

<sup>634</sup>Lepore, *The Name of War*, 74. At one point, the war was going so badly for the colonies that some residents in Massachusetts Bay proposed building an actual wall from the Charles River to the bay. The wall did not come to pass, but it was an indication of how desperate the situation was on the Anglo-Algonquian frontier.

Mohegans, and Narragansetts from siding with Metacom. Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay advocated a more aggressive stance. They had already alienated most of their Indian neighbors, and as a result, most of the fighting was within their borders.<sup>635</sup>

Not all Native communities joined Metacom.<sup>636</sup> Their reasons varied. Some, like the Pequots and Mohegans, had long established relationships with English authorities. Some smaller Native communities felt they could not risk alienating the English. Yet, from the onset of the war, all of the colonies talked about utilizing Native allies. Just as Metacom's forces combined aspects of Algonquian and English warfare, so too did the colonials. However, as the fighting intensified and took on increasingly racial overtones, the colonies split on how to treat their Indian allies, or even to use them at all. Since Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay bore the brunt of the war, they had the sharpest negative reactions. After the sacking of Springfield on October 5, 1675, Massachusetts Bay interned the Praying Indians on Deer Island in Boston Harbor, despite the fact that they had sided with the English and enjoyed high-profile supporters like John Eliot and Daniel Gookin.<sup>637</sup> Although their villages were destroyed during the war, the Praying Indians split their loyalties; some sided with Metacom, others with the English. Yet even these drastic actions were not the final word on Indian allies. Metacom himself ultimately met his end at the hands of a Praying Indian named Alderman on August 12,

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<sup>635</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 79-80, 83; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 108-109.

<sup>636</sup>Throughout the summer and fall of 1675, many smaller communities of Natives, such as the Gay Head Indians, Wyantineck, New Haven, Milford, and Tunxis groups, declared their fidelity to the English. In Massachusetts Bay, the so-called Praying Indians living in the mission towns also declared their fidelity to the colony. However, as the war took on increasingly racialized overtones, the Indians of Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth were all cast as untrustworthy.

<sup>637</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 87-88; Adam J. Hirsch, "The Collision of Military Cultures in Seventeenth-Century New England," *Journal of American History* 74 (March 1988): 187-212.



1676. Alderman was part of a joint English-Christian Indian force based out of Plymouth Colony.<sup>638</sup>

Connecticut was by far the most successful at utilizing its Algonquian allies, and was thus spared the worst of the war. While the colony passed laws that severely punished those who illegally sold guns to Indians, many Connecticut policies supported their Algonquian allies. Increase Mather noted that Connecticut was wise “not to make the Indians who lived amongst them their enemies.” In so doing, the Puritan minister felt that “the Lord hath made them to be as a wall to them, and also made use of them to do great service against the common Enemies of the English.”<sup>639</sup> Just as the trial of Metacom’s men presented Cassacinamon with a singular opportunity, the colony’s need for Native allies provided the sachem with another. As the fighting intensified, Connecticut once again turned to the Pequots and the Mohegans.<sup>640</sup> On July 2, 1675, John Pynchon wrote to Governor John Winthrop Jr. and proclaimed that “It is absolutely necessary to engage some Indians with us...I hope you will have the Pequots true to you.”<sup>641</sup> Pynchon had little to worry about; with Cassacinamon coordinating their activities there was little doubt that the Pequots would remain “true.” The ties binding Cassacinamon and the Pequots to the Winthrop family and Connecticut were still evident. John Winthrop, Jr. confided to his son Fitz-John that “I am glad to heare there is so good

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<sup>638</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 188.

<sup>639</sup>*CR*, II: 379, 381, 385, 387; Mather, *Brief History*, 48; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 109.

<sup>640</sup>For a more thorough look at how Uncas and the Mohegans aided the English during King Philip’s War, see Oberg, *Uncas*, 171-203.

<sup>641</sup>“John Pynchon to John Winthrop, Jr., July 2, 1675,” in Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *The Pynchon Papers*, volume 1, *Letters of John Pynchon, 1654-1700* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1982), 137.

issurance of fidelity” from the Pequots. He then offered these words of advice. “Its good to cherish, & keepe them confirmed,” the governor said, “by all fit meanes.”<sup>642</sup> These ties remained unbroken on the July mission to the Narragansett country. On July 12, 1675, John Allyn of the Connecticut General Court wrote to Wait Winthrop, militia commander for New London County and son of John Winthrop Jr. A group of Pequots traveled with Wait’s military attachment, and Allyn extended his gratitude on behalf of the colony to Cassacinamon and Mamaho. “Remember us to Robinn & Mamaho,’ Allyn asked, “& tell them we well accept of their readiness to attend o<sup>r</sup> orders, & shall keep it in remembrance for their future advantage.”<sup>643</sup>

At first the Narragansetts stressed their neutrality, and colonial officials sought to keep it that way.<sup>644</sup> In early July 1675, Wait Winthrop urged his father to send out a joint Anglo-Algonquian expedition to meet with Narragansett leaders “and prevent the Narrogansetts from Joyning with Philip.” A small English expedition marched east from Connecticut, “with sum of the Moheges and Pequots which seme redy to attend us.” Members of the Connecticut expedition traveled to speak with Ninigret and the other Narragansett sachems. However, it was apparent that tensions still separated these Native groups. Ninigret would only meet with the colonials if they did not bring “any of Uncas his men with us, for reasons which he will tell us when we speake with him.” Connecticut officials struck a deal with Ninigret, and three weeks later, Ninigret’s men delivered several enemy heads as a sign of his loyalty to the English. The English agreed

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<sup>642</sup>John Winthrop, Jr. to Fitz-John Winthrop, July 9, 1675, *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 8 (1882): 170.

<sup>643</sup>“The General Court of Connecticut to Wait Winthrop, July 12, 1675,” *MSHC*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 5 (1892): 3-4.

<sup>644</sup>“John Winthrop, Jr., to Major Savage and Other Officers of the Army, July 12, 1675,” *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 8 (1882): 173.

to pay a reward for every enemy head brought in to colonial authorities.<sup>645</sup> Officials in Hartford received many enemy heads as trophies during the war.

However, Ninigret did not speak for all of the Narragansetts. Ninigret's Narragansett-Niantic faction split from the rest of the Narragansett confederation, which publicly proclaimed its neutrality.<sup>646</sup> Upon Ninigret's separation, Miantonomi's brother Pessicus and Canonchet became the dominant sachems for the confederation. However, reports soon circulated that they harbored some of Metacom's men. In October 1675, the Commissioners of the United Colonies secured a pledge from the Narragansetts that they would turn over Metacom's followers by November 2. When the deadline passed unobserved, a massive Anglo-Algonquian expedition entered the Narragansett country. Connecticut's quota was 315 soldiers, and on November 28, they sent ambassadors to the Pequots and Mohegans for support. One hundred fifty warriors arrived; Owaneco led the Mohegans, and Catazapet led the Pequots. The army gathered in Rhode Island, and in December they marched towards the Narragansetts.<sup>647</sup>

On December 19, the Anglo-Algonquian forces found the Narragansett stronghold in a swamp near West Kingston, Rhode Island, using information taken from a captured

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<sup>645</sup>In his biography of Uncas, historian Michael Oberg hypothesizes that Ninigret refused to meet with Uncas because the war "reawakened long-simmering resentments and distrust and provided an opportunity for Indians to settle old scores." Uncas and Ninigret had a long and bitter history with one another, so it is no surprise that suspicions still lingered. Oberg, *Uncas*, 176; Wait Winthrop to Governor John Winthrop, July 8, 1675, *The Wyllys Papers: Correspondence and Documents Chiefly of Descendants of Gov. George Wyllys of Connecticut, 1590-1796*, volume 21 of the *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* (Hereafter *CCHS*) (Hartford: 1924), 210; Fitz-John Winthrop to John Winthrop Jr., "Wyllys Papers," *CCHS*, 217; *CR*, II: 345; Timothy J. Sehr, "Ninigret's Tactics of Accommodation: Indian Diplomacy in New England, 1637-1675," *Rhode Island History* 36 (1977): 52.

<sup>646</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 58, 156-159. Ninigret's break from the rest of the Narragansett confederation fit in with the practice of factionalism among Algonquian polities in the seventeenth-century.

<sup>647</sup>The Commissioners sought one thousand troops for this mission, and the colonies gathered the necessary forces. *CR*, II: 387; *Acts*, 2: 357; De Forest, *Indians*, 282; Selesky, *War and Society*, 21-22; Oberg, *Uncas*, 181-182.

Narragansett scout. Before dawn broke, the army took its position. What happened next came to be known as the Great Swamp Fight. The fighting was fierce and bloody. The Narragansetts killed nearly seventy Englishmen and wounded 150 others before they burst through the Narragansett palisades. The English killed ninety-seven warriors and wounded forty-eight but, in a grim parallel to the Mystic massacre, hundreds of Narragansetts died “by the burning of the houses.” The Great Swamp Fight, the bloodiest campaign of the war, pushed the Narragansetts fully into Metacom’s camp.<sup>648</sup>

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On July 15, 1675, Cassacinamon and Uncas officially declared their allegiance to Connecticut. Ever the self-promoter, Uncas “made a long narrative of his acts of friendship in former days to the English.” When James Fitch visited “Kosssisinaman’s towne,” he noted that Cassacinamon and his men “doe declare the same to me.”<sup>649</sup> No mention was made as to whether Cassacinamon prefaced his allegiance with a lengthy speech detailing his past deeds for the English. What mattered was that Cassacinamon and his warriors supported Connecticut. Cassacinamon not only spoke for Mashantucket/Noank, but for Pawcatuck as well. This support proved critical to Connecticut’s defense. Based on population estimates, the Mashantucket Pequots fielded eighty warriors and the Pawcatuck sent sixty. The Mohegans contributed one hundred warriors. While the number of Pequot warriors may not seem impressive, their skills proved invaluable. Throughout months of fighting, Pequots served alongside

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<sup>648</sup>George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip’s War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 185-198; Douglas Edward Leach, ed., *A Rhode Islander Reports on King Philip’s War: The Second William Harris Letter of August, 1676* (Providence, 1963), 36; Nathaniel Saltonstall, “A Continuation of the State of New England,” in *Narratives*, ed. Lincoln, 58-59; Hubbard, *History*, 1: 146-147; Oberg, *Uncas*, 181-182.

<sup>649</sup>“July 15, 1675,” *CR*, II: 336.

Connecticut soldiers in multiple engagements. Colonial units ranged in size, depending on the nature of the mission, from sixty to five hundred men. These units were accompanied by thirty to two hundred Native warriors. This alliance helped ensure that “the Connecticut militias suffered the lowest casualty rate of any New England force” during the war.<sup>650</sup>

While Connecticut needed both the Pequots and the Mohegans for its defense, Fitch made a passing reference in his letter to John Allyn that denoted key difference in how the English viewed the two sachems. Fitch told Allyn to “send your *advise* to Unkus and your *order* to Kossisinaman” (italics mine). Since the Pequots fell under direct English jurisdiction, many in the government thought it permissible to give them orders. However, the reality was far different. Between July 1675 and July 1676, Cassacinamon and the Pequots fought in at least twenty-three military expeditions against hostile Natives loyal to Metacom. Though the Pequots never overwhelmed their opponents by their sheer numbers, their skills proved invaluable. Three of these expeditions ventured into the heart of Wampanoag territory, while another four traveled to the middle of the Connecticut River Valley. But the majority of the expeditions, sixteen in all, were directed against the Narragansetts and the Nipmucks.<sup>651</sup> Cassacinamon and the Pequots targeted the Narragansetts as an opportunity to eliminate a long-time foe.

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<sup>650</sup>Kevin McBride, “Monhantic Fort: The Pequot in King Philip’s War,” in *Native Forts of the Long Island Sound Area*, ed. Gaynell Stone, volume 8 of *Reading in Long Island Archaeology and Ethnohistory* (Stony Brook, NY: Sheridan Books, 2006), 328; McBride, “Legacy,” 86; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 109.

<sup>651</sup>McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 327-328. For specific references to the individual expeditions, see *CR* volume 2 and *MHSC*.

The Pequots and Mohegans routinely acted as scouts and messengers, and Cassacinamon himself joined the Pequots on these missions<sup>652</sup> John Winthrop Jr., William Leete, and others argued that the Pequots and the Mohegans fought in ways the English could not, and frequently enlisted “the Mowheags and Pequots in a skulking manner to suppress the enemy.”<sup>653</sup> In this manner, the Indian allies channeled their “skulking way of war” to benefit the colonials. Without Native allies like the Pequots at their side, the colonial militias made easy targets. “More of ours are like to fall, rather than theirs,” Leete wrote, “unless the Lord, by speciall providences, doe deliver them into our hands.”<sup>654</sup> The River Colony embraced Governor Winthrop’s vision that “there will be need to ingage the Pequotts...for y<sup>e</sup> assistants of the English of a vigorous pursuit of the th<sup>r</sup> Enemy.” The successful joining of Cassacinamon’s Pequot warriors and other Natives alongside the Connecticut militias immediately produced positive results. Connecticut forces were never ambushed, and proved the most effective military forces during the war.<sup>655</sup>

On August 5, 1675, James Fitch, James Avery, and John Mason Jr. enlisted “Robbin Cassacinamon and Mawmohoe” and their warriors, to “repaire to the English

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<sup>652</sup>Wait Winthrop to Gov. John Winthrop, July 8, 1675, “Wyllys Papers,” *CCHS*, 211; Fitz-John Winthrop to Gov. John Winthrop, July 26, 1675, “Wyllys Papers,” *CCHS*, 21: 218; The Council of Connecticut to Maj. John Talcott, July 15, 1676, “Wyllys Papers,” *CCHS*, 21: 249. Colonial officials believed that the warriors’ knowledge of the terrain and Native warfare made them ideally suited for this role. Daniel Gookin, an early advocate for using Natives as scouts, prized them for “their quick and strong sight for the discovery of anything and their ability to avoid ambushes and locate the enemy. Daniel Gookin, “Christian Indians in New England,” 441-442; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 109.

<sup>653</sup>*CR*, II: 424; McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 328.

<sup>654</sup>“William Leete to John Winthrop Jr., September 23, 1675,” *MHSC*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 7 (1865): 579; Malone, *Skulking Way of War*, 63; Richard R. Johnson, “The Search for a Usable Indian: An Aspect of the Defense of Colonial New England,” *Journal of American History* 64 (1977): 639; Harold E. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven, CT: 1990), 10; Oberg, *Uncas*, 173.

<sup>655</sup>Connecticut Archives (Hereafter CA), Colonial War, 1: 7a; McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 325.

that are in the pursuit of the Indians, and assist them what they can.” Eighty Pequots and one hundred Mohegans joined a small English force commanded by Lt. John Browne to pursue Metacom’s forces in the Narragansett and Nipmuck territories.<sup>656</sup> Commanders and government officials praised the Pequots as a relief force. In August 1675, John Pynchon wrote to Governor Winthrop and John Allyn, telling them of the dire situation in Brookefield. Pynchon wrote of rumors that more enemy Indians were coming, so he asked that the “Pequets...make all Possible speed to come quickly.” With the aid of the Pequots, Pynchon felt confident about their success against the enemy.<sup>657</sup>

Connecticut officials openly championed the incorporation of Native warriors, and argued the point to other colonials who expressed reservations. In April 1676, Secretary John Allyn of Connecticut sent a letter to officials of the Bay Colony, emphasizing that Connecticut’s success was due to their units being “part English and part Indian.” Nearly a year before, on June 28, 1675, Edward Rawson of Massachusetts Bay had advised John Winthrop, Jr. to “use your utmost Authority to restreine the monhegins & pecquods.”<sup>658</sup> This warning was issued only days after the war began, so the Bay Colony’s fears are understandable. However, Connecticut’s experience in the following months belied those fears. Allyn asked the Bay Colony’s council, “why may not yourselves set out such volunteers of both sorts and encourage, as we do, who o grant them all plunder, and give them victuals, with ammunition, and soldier’s pay during time

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<sup>656</sup>*CR*, II: 346, 348. As this large force went out, Capt. Daniel Hincksman received a letter from officials in Hartford while on his own search near Wabawquassicke. The Connecticut government encouraged him “to continue in the persuit of the enemy.” They also advised him “to countenance and encourage the Pequotts and Mohegins” to join him in his search, as that would increase his chances of success.

<sup>657</sup>John Pynchon to Gov. John Winthrop or John Allyn, August 6, 1675, “Wyllys Papers” *CCHS*, 21: 221.

<sup>658</sup>Connecticut Archives, Colonial War 1: 3a.

they are out?”<sup>659</sup> The joint Connecticut-Algonquian forces were “very diligent hardy stoute vallyant men used and enured to ye said service [they] take very many and kill all save some boys and girls which soe afraights ye Indeans yt they make haste to deliver themselves to ye Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Rhode Island where they have quarter.” While the other colonies used Native allies, albeit begrudgingly, Connecticut embraced the idea. So comfortable were Connecticut militiamen with their Algonquian allies that on several expeditions, the number of warriors in a company surpassed the number of English soldiers. By 1676, Connecticut militias refused to participate in expeditions unless they were joined by Pequot or Mohegan warriors.<sup>660</sup> Forty years before, Connecticut militiamen ventured out into the unknown wilderness to battle the Pequots. Now they marched side-by-side, a turnaround made possible by the work of leaders like Robin Cassacinamon.

However, this relationship was not without problems. Despite the skills of Natives like Cassacinamon, their “otherness” generated questions among some colonials as to where their motives truly lay. Fitz-John Winthrop wrote to his brother Wait in July 1675, whereby he expressed these lingering doubts. Fitz-John agreed that “the Pequots & Mohegan Indians may be of very good use if securely managed, & will be usefull to send out in parties or march a distance from y<sup>e</sup> body to clere up any suspitious [pl]aces.” However, he cautioned his brother that “good care must be had of their faythfullnes, & tis good to suspect them a little, altho noe great reason appeare for it.”<sup>661</sup> Wait Winthrop

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<sup>659</sup>CA, Colonial War 1: 66; CR, II: 438.

<sup>660</sup>“The Second William Harris Letter,” 76; McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 329.

<sup>661</sup>“Fitz-John Winthrop to Wait Winthrop, July 8, 1675,” *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 8 (1882); 280.



responded to these familial concerns with an air of confidence. “I have about 60 of the Pequots with me well armed with Robin and Momoho,” Wait wrote, “which if they prove true *as I have no cause to suspect them* they may do good servis” (italics mine).<sup>662</sup> These sons of John Winthrop Jr. had known Cassacinamon for years, and their association continued throughout the sachem’s life. The Connecticut General Court tapped the Winthrop brothers to work with the Pequots because they had “so good an interest in the Pequots.” It was assumed that such a long history with the Pequots “a neer guesse how farr they may be [ap]proued” in the war effort.<sup>663</sup> Yet despite that personal history, Fitz-John Winthrop still expressed reservations regarding Indians. Fitz-John’s warning was especially ironic, given the fact that his brother, Cassacinamon, and Mamaho were on the mission to the Narragansett country that elicited John Allyn’s high praise for their efforts.<sup>664</sup>

While Wait Winthrop vouched for Cassacinamon and the Pequots, the incident demonstrated the complex issue of identity on the New England Anglo-Algonquian frontier. These issues were heightened during a war that, for many, reflected clear ethnic overtones. Metacom’s forces attacked English colonials and the symbols of the English way of life. New Englanders who “perceived no utilitarian or spiritual benefit in recognizing Indians as members of their society,” were the most outspokenly anti-Indian. Even colonials like Fitz-John Winthrop, who felt Natives had a place within the social order, felt that “their hierarchical view of New England society, with the English

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<sup>662</sup>CA, Colonial War 1:6a.

<sup>663</sup>“The Council of Connecticut to Fitz-John Winthrop and John Mason, September 5, 1675,” *MHSC*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 3: 448-449.

<sup>664</sup>“The General Court of Connecticut to Wait Winthrop, July 12, 1675,” *MSHC*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 5 (1892): 3-4.

occupying a higher rung than the Indians, presented a natural fault line along which the two sides of the war could be drawn.”<sup>665</sup>

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The Pequots’ support for Connecticut forces strengthened Cassacinamon’s relationships with members of the colonial government. Governor Winthrop turned seventy during the war, so Cassacinamon found it prudent to widen his circle of allies and forge stronger relationships with the next generation of Connecticut leaders. Cassacinamon fought alongside Fitz-John and Wait Winthrop, as well as James Avery, George Denison, and John Allyn. These men shaped Connecticut in the post-war period, so it was essential that Cassacinamon establish connections with them independent of his relationship with John Winthrop Jr. When he negotiated the Laws for the Pequot of 1675 and fought alongside Connecticut militias, Cassacinamon strengthened the bonds between the Pequots and the English.<sup>666</sup> Approximately in his mid-to-late-50s during King Philip’s War, Cassacinamon often went on the warpath with his warriors. There, he garnered the honor and spoils of war for himself, and was even injured in one of the last engagements of the war. Connecticut officials often extended their thanks to the Pequot sachem, and rewarded him with wampum and coats.<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>665</sup>Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 78; Lepore, *The Name of War*, 74; Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 55; Russell Bourne, *The Red King’s Rebellion: Racial Politics in New England, 1675-1678* (New York: Atheneum, 1990); Jennings, *Invasion*, 282-326; Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*.

<sup>666</sup>“Laws for the Pequot, 1675,” *CR*, II: 574-576; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 103. This was affirmed once again in the Laws of 1675, which required the Pequots to pay him tribute each year. Sachems typically received tribute from their communities, but having Connecticut authorities bolster this system certainly helped Cassacinamon.

<sup>667</sup>*CR*, II: 406, 431, 441, 472.

The Pequots expected compensation for the risks they engaged in during the war. Cassacinamon made sure that the Pequots received weapons, wampum, material goods, and captives. At a time when the New England colonies punished those who illegally sold guns to Indians, or fined colonists who shot their guns except at Indians or wolves, Connecticut supplied the Pequots with guns and ammunition.<sup>668</sup> With each victory, the Pequots made sure to claim their share of the war booty. In order to encourage the participation of warriors in a major campaign against the Narragansetts, Connecticut officials decided “that whosoever shall imploy themselves in this service, whether Indians or English...shall have all such plunder as they shall seize, both of persons and corn or other estate.” Wartime disrupted many of the subsistence activities of the Pequots, so any additional supplies they gained were crucial for the community’s survival.<sup>669</sup>

Perhaps the greatest compensation garnered by Cassacinamon and the Pequots was the receipt of captive Indians. Cassacinamon and his lieutenant Daniel each personally received several captives during the war. The English executed captive Indians on the spot or sold them into slavery. However, many captive Algonquians found respite among the Native allies of the English. Disease still hit Native communities hard in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and wartime losses exacerbated demographic decline. Just as they did after the Pequot War, captives (or adoptees) kept Native communities alive. The Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansett-Niantics all desired to keep the Indians they captured or who sought refuge in their communities. This became

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<sup>668</sup>John Mason to John Allyn, April 27, 1676, “Wyllys Papers,” *CCHS*, XXI: 240.

<sup>669</sup>*CR*, II: 418.

a point of contention between the English and Natives. On February 16, 1675, the Connecticut War Council tried to rectify the situation. Recognizing that “there be sundry of the enemies now in the hands of the Pequots, Moheags and w<sup>th</sup> Ninicraft,” the Council offered to buy captives from their allies, offering “for every man, woman and child...two coats apiece.” Forty captives were worth “a barell of powder.” This offer did not settle the matter. The Pequots kept many of the captives they took during the war, and Connecticut officials did not pursue the matter vigorously because they depended on the Pequots’ help.<sup>670</sup>

King Philip’s War also offered Cassacinamon, Uncas, and Ninigret the opportunity to settle some old scores and long-standing political grudges. Edward Palmes argued for a uniform Indian policy for the Pequots, Mohegans, and Ninigret’s Narragansett-Niantics, noting that “the great Difficulty...is how to keepe friendship with all three.”<sup>671</sup> They also took care “to p<sup>r</sup>vent all disquietments & commotions between o<sup>r</sup> Indian friends that goe out” against the enemy. The sachems knew how essential they and their warriors were to Connecticut’s goals, and Connecticut officials knew it, too. Their alliances with Connecticut forced the sachems to work together, but their political attacks against one another did not cease. In this respect at least, the war did not alter the relationship between these long-time opponents. In August 1675, after the first excursion into the Narragansett country, Connecticut officials summoned Cassacinamon and Uncas to a council meeting because some Pequots accused the Mohegans of perpetrating attacks that had been attributed to rebel Nipmucks. They settled the matter, but it served as yet

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<sup>670</sup>John Winthrop, Jr. to William Leete, *MHSC*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol. 8 (1882): 177; *CR*, II: 408, 418, 475, 500.

<sup>671</sup>Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk*, 146; Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 106.

another sign that the two rival sachems still disliked one another. Cassacinamon then launched a series of complaints against Thomas Stanton and Ninigret, saying that they owed him a large sum of wampum. Perhaps this debt related to the bribe Cassacinamon paid in 1669. It was certainly was a major point of contention with the Pequot sachem, and he vigorously pursued this matter. Connecticut officials begged the Pequot sachem to hold off on his requests until after the war. They swore to help Cassacinamon achieve satisfaction, and they delivered; Cassacinamon received his payment.<sup>672</sup>

The war provided a socially acceptable way for Pequot men to attain status in the community. Ever since the battle with Ninigret in the 1650s, the Pequots had found limited opportunities for battle. This deprived young Pequot men of one of the traditional means of achieving status within their community. This changed quickly with King Philip's War. Pequot warriors knew they were a highly prized resource, and fought on their terms. Connecticut offered incentives for them to fight, and protected them from cases of mistaken identity during battles. Connecticut authorized that "if the Moheags and Pequots doe still proffer their service...care must be taken for a signal marke to distinguish from other Indians." The Pequots and Mohegans fought bravely, but when they completed their mission, they said so. After a major victory against the Narragansetts in July 1676, when a joint Pequot-Mohegan-Connecticut force killed three hundred Narragansetts and captured sixty more, the Pequots and Mohegans demanded that they return to Connecticut rather than pursue Metacom. The English desired to give

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<sup>672</sup>*CR*, II: 441, III: 9; The Council of Connecticut to Maj. John Talcott, July 15, 167, "Wyllys Papers," *CCHS*, 21: 248; John Mason to Fitz-John Winthrop, August 15, 17, 1675, *Winthrop Papers*, reel 11, *MHSC*; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 106.

chase, but the Pequots and Mohegans would not be moved. So, “to gratify the Mohegin and Pequod Indians,” the English complied.<sup>673</sup>

The Pequots embraced the opportunity to attack their enemies. The overwhelming majority of their military operations targeted their old foes the Narragansetts, rather than Metacom himself; the Pequots directed sixteen of their twenty-three confirmed military engagements against the Narragansetts and Nipmucs.<sup>674</sup> In a rare display of unity, the major Pequot and Mohegan leaders all participated in one Narragansett expedition in late January/early February 1675. Connecticut’s Council of War appreciated their efforts, and voted “to return thanks to Uncas, Owanecoe, Mawmawho and Robbin for y<sup>r</sup> good service.” The Council then encouraged Cassacinamon and the others “to scout abroad and pick up such of the enemie as they shall find, with the promise of reward for such service.” The largest number of Pequot volunteers always came forward for operations in the Narragansett country. Perhaps they sought revenge for the Pequot War all those years ago. Pequots watched the Narragansetts burn during the Great Swamp Fight as Narragansetts watched the Pequots burn at Mystic.<sup>675</sup>

This vendetta against the Narragansetts explains why the Pequots and Mohegans were so eager to defeat Canonchet. It also adds greater significance to Canonchet’s execution at the hands of Cassacinamon, Owaneco, and Catazapet in April 1676. The ritual killing of the Narragansett sachem was not just an execution, but the ultimate

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<sup>673</sup>Hubbard, *Narrative*, I: 253.

<sup>674</sup>McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 327-328. For specific references to the individual expeditions, see *CR* volume 2 and *MHSC*.

<sup>675</sup>*CR*, II: 406.

display of power and authority. Canonchet displayed his strength by not showing fear. Cassacinamon exhibited his strength by taking Canonchet's life. The fact that all three Native leaders played a part in Canonchet's death and dismemberment gave each man a part in that victory. Cassacinamon thus acquired Canonchet's power and added it to his own.<sup>676</sup>

The Mashantucket Pequots proved to be important allies in ways beyond their fighting prowess. Their location also proved advantageous. The Mashantucket reservation separated the eastern Connecticut towns of New London, Groton, Mystic, Stonington, and Norwich from the territory of the Wampanoags, Narragansetts, and Nipmucs.<sup>677</sup> Connecticut feared invasion from these eastern groups, so the reservation's prime location served as a rendezvous point for the English and Algonquian allies. Soldiers met "at Meshuntupit (Mashantucket)," and staged several joint Connecticut-Pequot-Mohegan military expeditions from February to May of 1676. Warriors and soldiers also stored supplies of food and munitions there. From Mashantucket, Anglo-Algonquian forces marched east into Narragansett and Nipmuck territory.<sup>678</sup> The Pequot reservation also served as a "holding center." Pequot warriors detained captive enemies at Mashantucket; sometimes Cassacinamon sent them along to the English, and sometimes he kept them there. Mashantucket, once the refuge for the Pequots escaping the horrors of war, now acted as the staging ground for another war.

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<sup>676</sup>De Forest, *Indians*, 282-283; Saltonstall, "New and Further Narrative," 9; Oberg, *Uncas*, 186.

<sup>677</sup>"John Winthrop, Jr. to Thomas Peters, September 3, 1646," *WP*, 5: 101; McBride, "Monhantic Fort," 329. Cassacinamon and John Winthrop, Jr. had long advocated that the Pequots could serve as a "buffer" between the English and other Native peoples in the frontier.

<sup>678</sup>Thomas Minor, *The Minor Diaries, Stonington, Connecticut, Thomas 1653-1684, Manasseh 1696-1720* (Stonington: Thomas Minor Society, 1993), 132—136.

The Pequots' frequent participation on these military expeditions left their own homes and families undefended. In July 1675, during the first Narragansett expeditions, Cassacinamon requested that Wait Winthrop provide English troops to the reservation, with the expressed purpose of protecting the Pequot wives and children at Mashantucket while the warriors were away.<sup>679</sup> Cassacinamon made this his major condition for participation, and Connecticut authorities, eager to secure the Pequots' aid, complied. The General Court empowered Wait Winthrop to secure the Pequot civilians ordering that "when there shall be occasion to imploy" the Pequots he "must endeavourer to secure their wives & children."<sup>680</sup>

To protect these civilians, the English and the Pequots constructed a fortified village in Mashantucket. The site, now known as Monhantic Fort, was located on the eastern end of a 40-acre peninsula that extends into the southwestern corner of the 500-acre Great Cedar Swamp, the place the Pequots called Cuppahommock during the Pequot War. Cuppahommock meant "refuge or hiding place" in the Pequot-Mohegan dialect, and once again it provided protection to the Pequots in a time of trouble. Although not large enough to hold the entire Mashantucket Pequot population, the archaeological evidence proves that it housed many Pequot families. That same evidence also confirms that the Monhantic village was just a brief Pequot settlement. The palisade was not designed for longevity, and that there are no overlapping domestic structures or features

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<sup>679</sup>CA, Colonial War 1: 6a.

<sup>680</sup>“The General Court of Connecticut to Wait Winthrop, July 12, 1675,” *MSH Coll.*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 5 (1892): 4; McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 329.



that suggest long-term occupation. Archaeologists estimate that it was a two to five year occupation.<sup>681</sup>

The Monhantic Fort was not the first Native fortification that Englishmen helped Native allies build.<sup>682</sup> But Monhantic Fort was more than just another fortification. The fort combined Native and European architectural styles. The domestic structures in the village — the wigwams, hearths, and storage pits — were all built using Native techniques. However, the palisade “integrated elements of Native and English military architecture.”<sup>683</sup> Like the Mystic fortifications of the Pequot War, the Monhantic palisades were made of thick logs, and the entrances formed where the palisades overlapped. Unlike previous Native fortifications, Monhantic’s palisade was not circular, but rectangular. Defenders manned lookout towers placed at the corners, a common feature of European siege defenses. This blending of styles served as a tangible symbol of the successful Pequot-Connecticut alliance, a physical representation of how enmeshed the Pequot and English worlds had become under Cassacinamon’s efforts.<sup>684</sup> Forty years before on that very spot, Pequots sought refuge from the English and their allies. Now, the Pequots and English worked to defend Pequot women and children. The English had once feared the Pequots’ prowess as warriors; now they celebrated it as essential to an English victory, due to the persistent work of Robin Cassacinamon.

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<sup>681</sup>McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 324-325. The Mashantucket Pequot population was somewhere between 350-500 people during the seventeenth-century.

<sup>682</sup>Drake, *King Philip’s War*, 51. Indian inhabitants at Natick received aid in the 1650s, while Connecticut helped the Mohegans strengthen their fortifications at Shantok in the 1670s.

<sup>683</sup>McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 325.

<sup>684</sup>McBride, “Monhantic Fort,” 325-326.

### III

Connecticut heralded their Anglo-Algonquian alliances, and credited allies like Cassacinamon and Uncas with many of their victories, but the situation was demonstrably different in Boston. As the war continued, it took on characteristics that would now label it a “race war.” In October 1675, the Massachusetts General Court interned the denizens of Natick on Deer Island. Three weeks later, the Bay Colony magistrates passed another act that prevented the Natick people from leaving the island “upon paine of death.” Bay Colony residents viewed colonials with close ties to Indians, such as Daniel Gookin and John Eliot, with suspicion and hatred. Lynch mobs roamed Boston streets, “ruthlessly putting to death suspect Indians and denouncing and threatening ‘Indian-lovers.’” Indian captives not retained by Native allies were sold into West Indian slavery or bound in servitude among the English.<sup>685</sup> New Englanders, with some important exceptions, retaliated against Algonquians with less and less restraint; villages were burned to the ground, and thousands of men, women, and children died.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>685</sup>Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England* (hereafter *MBR*), 5 volumes (Boston, 1853), 13 October 1675, 5: 56-57 and 3 November 1675, 5: 64; John Eliot to Robert Boyle, 17 December 1675, in Ford, *Correspondence*, 53-54; Saltonstall, “Present State of New England,” 1-4; Daniel Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England in the Years, 1675, 1676, 1677* (New York, 1972), 485; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 158-159.

<sup>686</sup>In Plymouth Colony the populace lived in a constant state of panic. For this reason, the colonial government ordered that anyone who fired a gun within the bounds of the colony for any reason “except att an Indian or a woolve” would be fined five shillings. “October 4, 1675,” *PCR*, 5: 177; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 159. One of the most notorious New Englanders to embrace this new violence with such open vigor was a Jamaican privateer named Samuel Mosely. Mosely raised a company of “volunteers” in Massachusetts Bay by soliciting “the most reckless and disreputable class in the colony.” At the time however, Mosely’s actions were thought to “make him an excellent Souldier, and of an undaunted Spirit, one whose Memory will be Honourable in New England.” Mosely was infamous for the brutality he displayed to Indians, alternately enslaving them or executing them on the spot. When he reported to the Bay Colony’s governor, John Leverett, on the status of an Indian captive he had taken near Springfield, Mosely casually told the governor that the woman “was ordered to be torn in peeces by Doggs.” Samuel Mosely to Governor Leverett, 16 October 1675, in George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip’s War*

Despite this ethnic violence, the hope for final victory against Metacom lay in the Anglo-Indian alliances forged by people like Cassacinamon and the Winthrops. Connecticut officials directly attributed their wartime success to these alliances. Even Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, despite the presence of virulent anti-Indian colonials, eventually incorporated Native allies into their companies. Throughout 1675 and 1676, most of the key victories against Metacom's forces were won by joint Anglo-Algonquian expeditions. By the spring of 1676, the tide turned against Metacom, and the colonials and their Indian allies had gained the upper hand.<sup>687</sup>

In January 1676, the decisive blow against Metacom came not from the New Englanders and their Algonquian allies, but from New York and the Mohawks. Under the leadership of a new royal governor, Edward Andros, New York avoided the devastation unleashed by King Philip's War. Andros was the consummate royal official, determined to exert the crown's authority over this unruly region of Britain's North American empire. Andros reaffirmed the peace agreements negotiated between New York and several Algonquian groups in the Hudson Valley region, and he strengthened

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(Baltimore, MD: 1967), 69, 401; Saltonstall, "Present State of New England," 2-4; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 159.

<sup>687</sup>Scores of companies included at least one or two Natives acting as scouts and guides. But soon, more militias added sizeable numbers of Natives — Pequots, Mohegans, "Praying Indians," and others — to their ranks. Connecticut's Captain Daniel Denison led a force of 112 Pequots and 66 colonial volunteers. Connecticut trusted their Native allies enough to let them outnumber their white counterparts on at least some missions, but other colonies also included significant numbers of Indians. Massachusetts Bay's Daniel Henchman had 17 Natives fighting alongside his force of 68 Englishmen. And during the final stages of the war, Plymouth's most successful companies had large numbers of Natives attached to them. Major Bradford had 50 Indians fighting beside his 150 men, and in the spring of 1676, Benjamin Church led a combined force of 200 colonists and 100 Natives. See Oberg, *Uncas*, 188; Drake, *King Philip's War*, 92; William Hubbard, *A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England* [1677], reprinted in Samuel G. Drake, ed., *The History of the Indian Wars in New England*, 2 vols (1865; reissued in facsimile, Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1990), I: 183; Daniel Henchman to John Leverett, July 31, 1675, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, vol. 67. The letter is reprinted in George Madison Bodge, *Soldiers in King Philip's War*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1906; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1976), 49-50, 464; Benjamin Church, *The Entertaining History of King Philip's War* [1716], reprinted in Benjamin Church, *Diary of King Philip's War, 1675-1676* (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1975), 106, 108.

Albany as a secure and friendly settlement where Indians and English could conduct business. Governor Andros cemented his reputation as a political figure on this northeastern Anglo-Indigenous frontier by formalizing a peace agreement with the Mohawks.<sup>688</sup> And it was the Mohawks who had ended the fighting in the Pequot War, when they killed Sassacus and sent his head to the English.<sup>689</sup>

In January 1676, the Mohawks, the Keepers of the Eastern Door of the Iroquois League, attacked Metacom's followers at a place called Hoosick, fifty miles east of Albany. Andros feared that Metacom would eventually attack New York, or seek the aid of the Hudson River Valley Algonquians. Temporarily setting aside long-standing disputes with Connecticut and the other New England colonies, Andros and the Mohawks agreed to attack any Algonquian groups who sided with Metacom. The martial prowess of the Mohawks was well-established. Uncas himself had predicted "that the said Mohucks were the only Persons likely to put an End to the War."<sup>690</sup> The Mohawk victory "broke the back" of Metacom's resistance. It drove his forces back into New England and straight into the sights of Anglo-Algonquian forces. The Mohawks also cut off Metacom from the French supplies and weapons he had come to depend on to carry out his war effort.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>688</sup>For a more detailed analysis of Andros's negotiations and policies, see Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 160-166.

<sup>689</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 110-121. A long feared presence in the colonial New England, for decades the Mohawks had loomed in the background of New England Anglo-Indigenous relations; even the specter of the Mohawks was enough to give people pause. New England Algonquian leaders like Cassacinamon, Uncas, and Ninigret frequently invoked the threat of an alliance with the Mohawks as a diplomatic tactic to carry sway with English officials — the threat of entering into such an alliance, or that their enemies sought such an alliance with the Mohawks.

<sup>690</sup>Saltonstall, "New and Further," 88; "Council of Connecticut to Andros, January 13, 1676," *CR*, II: 398-399; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 162-163.

<sup>691</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 188.

Facing defeat, the Wampanoag sachem and his remaining forces returned to their homeland. Metacom then confronted a joint Plymouth-Christian Indian force led by Benjamin Church. On August 12, 1676, Metacom was shot and killed by a Christian Indian named Alderman. Church desecrated the body as a warning for all to see: he took Metacom's head, quartered the rest of the body, and hung the parts from four trees. The Wampanoag sachem's head was put on a pike and paraded from town to town. His wife, his son, and many of his followers were sold into West Indian slavery.

King Philip was dead, but some of his followers were still on the loose. By the summer of 1676, most of the Pequots and Mohegans had grown tired of fighting and wanted to return home. However, Cassacinamon and a small group of Algonquians joined Major John Talcott's troops on one last expedition. On August 15, 1676, Talcott's Connecticut-Algonquian troops routed a group of Natives near present-day Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The group was heading west, perhaps seeking refuge among the New York Algonquians. Twenty of the refugees were captured and three were killed, but some of the Connecticut-Algonquian troops were also wounded, including Cassacinamon. On August 22, the Connecticut government "ordered that Mathew Joanes be imprest to transport Robin Cassinamon and the wounded Indians and their attendants to N. London," where they received medical attention and rest.<sup>692</sup> The war for Cassacinamon, the Pequots, and Connecticut was over.

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<sup>692</sup>CR, II: 472; Rev. James Fitch to John Allyn, 14 July 1676, "Wyllys Papers," CCHS, 21: 240; Caulkins, *New London*, 185-186; Shultz and Tougias, *King Philip's War*, 232-233; Oberg, *Uncas*, 188-189.

#### IV

New England after King Philip's War was not the same Anglo-Algonquian society that had existed before the war. Where one out of every four New Englanders had once been Native, a new demographic reality set in. The "covalent" Anglo-Algonquian society was replaced by one in which the English colonials were clearly the dominant power. Between 1670 and 1680, despite the violence and death, the English colonial population leapt from 52,000 to 68,000.<sup>693</sup> By contrast, New England Algonquians lost between 56-69% of their people due to the war. These Algonquians were killed during the war, sold into slavery, or fled the region. In this post-war New England, Algonquians made up only 8-12% of the regional population. The war devastated the Wampanoags and the Nipmucs. The Christian Indians were also reduced; the number of Praying Towns dropped from fourteen to four. Most of the surviving Narragansetts fled to Ninigret's confederation.<sup>694</sup> Along with these demographic shifts, the focus of frontier politics shifted farther west, as Anglo-Iroquoian relations took center stage. The Mohawks, a specter in New England Anglo-Indigenous politics for decades, now took center stage as the new power to be courted by the New England colonies and New York. As the Mohawks and New York wielded greater influence, the Pequots faced a met challenge.

Cassacinamon faced these circumstances without his closest English ally. On the morning of April 5, 1676, John Winthrop Jr. died in the city of Boston after battling a respiratory illness. He was in the city on business for the United Colonies, helping to

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<sup>693</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 169.

<sup>694</sup>Ibid, 175. The modern Narragansetts are the descendants of Ninigret's Narragansett-Niantics.

coordinate war activities. The governor was seventy years old. In his later years, Governor Winthrop kept busy with personal and economic interests.<sup>695</sup> Yet, Anglo-Algonquian frontier politics concerned him until the end of his life. In his last official duties with the United Colonies, Winthrop Jr. championed a moderate stance when dealing with the Native peoples. In the long term, a moderate attitude stabilized the region, but such a policy had immediate payoffs as well. If the English treated the Indians with an even hand, the enemy would retain a “sympatheticall” attitude toward “those poore English in their hands.”<sup>696</sup>

No record exists of Cassacinamon’s reaction to the death of his long-time friend and political ally. What words could adequately express nearly forty years of friendship, struggle, and triumph? Cassacinamon continued the work that he and his friend had initiated decades earlier. A sachem of the Pequot and the scion of a leading Puritan family had been an unlikely partnership, but it proved a successful one. Now, Cassacinamon nurtured his relationships with the remaining members of the Winthrop family and with others in the Connecticut government. In so doing, he sought the protection of his people and an end to the war.

Despite the loss of his long-time partner, King Philip’s War reaffirmed Robin Cassacinamon’s status as a political lynchpin in Anglo-Algonquian Connecticut. Cassacinamon’s steadfast application of advantageous political alliances, his skills as a negotiator, and his persuasive abilities as a sachem strengthened the Pequots’ position in Connecticut during the war. Once feared, his people were now celebrated. The English provided him with weapons and ammunition, and they protected Pequot women and

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<sup>695</sup>Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 354-355.

<sup>696</sup>Black, *The Younger John Winthrop*, 354.

children. Cassacinamon and the Pequots received wampum, property, and prisoners who were soon adopted into the tribe. The Pequot sachem and his people were heroes, at least for a time. Proportionally, the Pequots and Mohegans had contributed more men to stop Metacom's revolt than had the Connecticut colonials.<sup>697</sup> For a brief time, the Pequots regained significant influence with the Connecticut government, and arrested the steady encroachment of English authority. In the aftermath of King Philip's War, New Englanders — Algonquian and English — rebuilt their communities, but things had changed. Robin Cassacinamon once again took up the task of securing a place for his people in this altered power structure. But he did so without his long-time partner, John Winthrop Jr. He now had to forge new alliances to continue the work.

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<sup>697</sup>Drake, *King Philip's War*, 169.



## Chapter 7: “Bequithed to them as a legacy of Robin Cassacinamon” – The Mashantucket Pequots after King Philip’s War

In the aftermath of King Philip’s War, a different Anglo-Algonquian New England rose from the ashes of burned-out colonial towns and Algonquian villages. Gone was the “covalent” society that had existed prior to 1675, and in its place, the English finally attained the dominance they had long sought. The new focus of English-Indigenous relations lay further west, in New York, with the Anglo-Iroquoian frontier taking center stage. After 1676, southern New England Algonquians sat firmly entrenched within the English colonial system.

Even in this altered environment, Cassacinamon and the Pequots navigated colonial politics and society. Cassacinamon dealt with these changes through well-established political tactics: personal alliances, extensive ties to his community, and legal petitions that confirmed Pequot land rights and bound the Pequots to Cassacinamon.<sup>698</sup> The gratitude of Connecticut authorities towards Cassacinamon and the Pequots temporarily shielded them from the changing Anglo-Algonquian world. The final sixteen years of Cassacinamon’s life saw the sachem face new challenges — both internal and external — to his authority. As always, Cassacinamon utilized every resource at his disposal to combat those threats, and he relied on the established strategies of alliances, petitions, and personal charisma to gather Pequot communities within his sphere of influence. Thus, Cassacinamon retained the core of the Mashantucket Pequots around his person, while the tribe maintained their kinship networks and reservation.

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<sup>698</sup>Colin G. Calloway, “Introduction: Surviving the Dark Ages,” in *After King Philip’s War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 4-7.

## I

In the closing months of King Philip's War and the years that followed, Cassacinamon and the Pequots reaped considerable benefits from their alliance with the English. During the war, the English offered several incentives to their Native allies to induce them to fight on their behalf. They permitted the Pequots, Mohegans, and Ninigret's Narragansett-Niantics to retain spoils of war (corn, wampum, furs, etc.) captured from the enemy. In addition, the English agreed to pay for the services of their Indian allies in the form of highly prized manufactured goods. These in-kind payments featured knives, kettles, copper pots, coats, duffels, and firearms and ammunition; all of these goods had been difficult to obtain after the collapse of the wampum economy in the 1660s.<sup>699</sup> After the war this sharing of resources continued, at least for a time. As a sign of gratitude, the General Court also recognized the Pequots' right "to hunt in the conquered lands in the Narrogancett Country, provided they sett not traps to prejudice English cattell, and that they doe their best to attacque and destroy the enemie, and continually upon all such occasions they make reporte thereof to the next Authority of the English in this colony." In 1685, the Connecticut General Court reaffirmed that the Pequots and Mohegans had "free liberty to hunt in any of the conquered lands within the limits of this colony." This expansion of hunting rights benefited the Pequots, enabling them to persist in their traditional seasonal subsistence activities well into the eighteenth century.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>699</sup>Michael Oberg, *Uncas: First of the Mohegans* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 189.

<sup>700</sup>J. Hammond Trumbull, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut*, 15 volumes, (Hartford: 1850), II: 289, III: 172 (Hereafter *CR*); Kevin A. McBride, "'Ancient and Crazie': Pequot Lifeways during the Historic Period," in *Algonkians of New England: Past and Present*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston, MA: Boston University, 1991), 72-75.

The Pequots also continued their association with Connecticut's militias. By siding with the colony, Pequot men had participated in sanctioned warfare. This offered them the opportunity to engage in traditional rites of passage and advance socially, reaffirming their place within Pequot society. It also afforded them economic advantages. For years after the war, the colony continued to acknowledge their participation. In 1690, Wait-Still Winthrop spoke to the General Court and reminded that ruling body that the Indians were a valuable asset to Connecticut. "So many as can be procured of the Pequots and Moheags or others armed and cloathed we are willing to imploy in the service," he said, "& desire you to signify it to such persons as may make it most effectual."<sup>701</sup> The General Court approved a measure that paid Indians for their participation in military operations. "The Indians that goe out in the service shall be allowed as the captaines shall agree with them," the law said, "provided they allowe not above twenty shillings per month." While the compensation provided Pequot men with an opportunity to earn a wage, the pay rate was still lower than what the average English private soldier earned for his service.<sup>702</sup>

Natives and English alike were deeply interested in the fate of the captives taken during King Philip's War. From a Pequot perspective, the taking and retention of war captives may have been the most important reason for siding with the colonials.<sup>703</sup> Captive taking fulfilled demographic needs and cultural demands within Pequot society,

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<sup>701</sup>Charles Hoadly and Albert Carlos Bates, eds., "Early Letters and Documents Relating to Connecticut, 1643-1709" in volume 24, *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1932), 32 (Hereafter *CCHS*).

<sup>702</sup>*CR*, II: 418, III: 172, IV: 19; McBride, "Ancient and Crazie," 72-75.

<sup>703</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 189. While Oberg focuses his argument on the exploits of Uncas and the Mohegans, his analysis can be applied to Cassacinamon and the Pequots as well. As historian Michael Oberg notes in his work, captive taking and raiding enemy villages was a traditional element of Native warfare in the Eastern Woodlands.

and provided material compensation. Captives benefitted Native societies like the Pequots because they helped replenish their populations. In this respect, the issue of Indian captives taken during King Philip's War fit into traditional Native social paradigms. Compounding wartime losses, Native groups were still ravaged by epidemic diseases. These realities pressured the Pequots and other tribes to keep their captives. The English intended to track down all of Metacom's remaining followers, and they knew they might seek shelter among other Indian communities. In February 1675, as the war raged, Connecticut officials offered material and financial compensation to the Pequots and other Algonquian allies who turned over those captives.<sup>704</sup> While the Pequots occasionally participated in these exchanges, they also kept many of the captives they took. Cassacinamon and Daniel each requested and received captives as rewards for their services,<sup>705</sup> but they were not the only ones to enjoy this privilege.

The total numbers are unknown, but the captives taken by the Pequots, Mohegans, and Ninigret's Narragansett-Niantics proved sufficiently numerous for the English to pass several laws that attempted to monitor and control the fate of those captives. In April 1676, the Connecticut Council of War prohibited colonists from "buying" Indian captives without first receiving an official government license.<sup>706</sup> They ordered that "such Indians as are in hands of the Narrogancetts, Nahantick or Pequots...except such ancient persons

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<sup>704</sup>CR, II: 408. Connecticut's Council of War offered "for every man, woman and child they receive, two coates apiece, except for sucking children, and for them, they to pay one coat a piece, upon the delivery of the Indians to sayd Gentlemen."

<sup>705</sup>CR, II: 418, 500; "April 16, 1676," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Hereafter *MHSC*), 3<sup>rd</sup> series, (1885), I: 71; *Connecticut Archives* (Hereafter *CA*), Colonial War 1: 46.

<sup>706</sup>CR, II: 434-435, 472-475. John Talcott's account book shows that Connecticut colonists were buying and selling Indians. Talcott's account book is referenced in Samuel Orcutt, *The Indians of the Housatonic and Naugatuck Valleys* (Hartford, CT: 1972), 38.

as mercy forbids their remove,” be turned over to English authorities.<sup>707</sup> In October 1676, Connecticut magistrates issued a set of rules to determine the status of surrendering Indians. Indians who killed English soldiers and settlers faced either execution or enslavement in the West Indies. Those who had not killed colonists “shall have their lives and shall not be sold out of the Country for slaves.” Instead, the magistrates ruled that they would spend ten years in service to the English. After that ten-year period, they “were free to live in English towns under English laws.”<sup>708</sup>

One month later, Connecticut commissioners met with Pequots, Mohegans, and Ninigret’s Narragansett-Niantics at the town of Norwich. This Anglo-Algonquian meeting intended to sort out the captive issue and determine a unified policy for those who “forfeited their lives by warring against us.” The commissioners were instructed to assemble a list “of all captives and the surrendering Indians” and secure something “more than words to binde them to fidelity.” A yearly tribute would be imposed for each adult male and they were also to “take off all young and single persons of all sorts to be put into English families (as pledges for their fidelity) and to be apprentices for ten years; after which term they may be returned to their parents, upon the proof of the fidelity of both children and parent; otherwise to be forfeited to slavery.”<sup>709</sup> The meeting between the allies took place in December, but no records reveal what happened there. However, based on what is known about captive taking and adoption in the Eastern Woodlands, it can be safely theorized that any captives who remained among the Pequots were eventually incorporated into those tribes.

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<sup>707</sup>CR, II: 486.

<sup>708</sup>CR, II: 297-298; Oberg, *Uncas*, 193.

<sup>709</sup>CR, II: 481-482; Oberg, *Uncas*, 193.

With the passing of John Winthrop Jr. in 1676, Cassacinamon searched for a new English advocate. Cassacinamon appears to have had reasonably close relationships with the deceased governor's children, so they were the logical choice. However, while Cassacinamon had friendly relations with the Winthrop children, it was not the same arrangement. Winthrop's daughters, while apparently friendly with Cassacinamon, did not possess political power due to seventeenth century English gender views. Winthrop's sons, Fitz-John and Wait-Still, were already involved in politics, but they did not yet carry their father's clout. Still, the brothers' advocated for the Pequots in their own ways. Wait Winthrop shared his father's overt appreciation of Cassacinamon and the Pequots, and he championed the use of Pequots as military allies during and after King Philip's War. Despite this support, Wait's political interests were split between Connecticut and Massachusetts Bay.<sup>710</sup> In time, Wait Winthrop became a Commissioner of Indian Affairs and a strong advocate for the Pequots in the eighteenth century.<sup>711</sup> However, in the 1670s and 1680s, Wait Winthrop was still building his own power base. His words encouraged Connecticut officials to take action, but he did not shape colonial policy as his father had done. Fitz-John's political career was grounded in Connecticut, and he held a variety of government posts from the 1670s to 1690s. In time, he followed his father's footsteps as governor of Connecticut, and served from 1698 to 1707. Once in power, he too aided the Pequots.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>710</sup>“Letter from John Winthrop to Wait Winthrop, May 26, 1672,” *Indian Colonial Research Center* (Hereafter *ICRC*), (Mystic, CT), DOC.1672-05-26A; Robert C. Black III, *The Younger John Winthrop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 119, 181, 346, 348-349, 394.

<sup>711</sup>Sarah Louise Holmes, ““In Behalf of Myself & My People’: Mashantucket Pequot Strategies in Defense of Their Land Rights,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut 2007, 119-121.

<sup>712</sup>Fitz-John Winthrop held a variety of political positions in Connecticut. He was the New London representative to the General Court in 1671, served as both deputy and assistant to the General

Outside of the Winthrop family, Cassacinamon found an advocate in Captain James Avery. Avery served alongside Cassacinamon and the Pequots during King Philip's War, and after the war those ties continued with Avery as their appointed overseer. In the Pequot Laws of 1675, James Avery (then a lieutenant) was chosen by the General Court to work as the tribe's principal agent, and "to give their advice and help in all cases of difficulty for the well management of their trust and affayres; to whome they are in all such cases to repayre."<sup>713</sup> The overseers managed tribal resources and accounts, and kept books on all important economic and demographic information. The office of the overseer lasted into the nineteenth century, and in some respects it reflected the increased power that the English and their American descendants exerted over the Pequots. The overseer was an appointed position, and as the decades passed it became marginalized. However, the relationship between the Pequots and their overseers did not reflect simple subjugation, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the office still carried weight. When managed correctly by all the concerned parties, the Pequot-overseer relationship replicated elements of the original Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance. When the Mashantucket Pequots dealt with an overseer they liked, they worked well with the man and made advances in the defense of their rights. When the tribe received an overseer they clashed with, they drove the man away. Tribal members made

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Court in 1671, 1678, 1690, and 1693-1697, the head of New London County Militia in 1672, Sergeant Major of Long Island in 1673, and was a council member of the Edmund Andros led Dominion of New England from 1687 to 1689. He was elected governor of Connecticut from 1698 to 1707. He died on November 27, 1707.

<sup>713</sup>*CR*, II: 576.

his job extremely difficult, through outright or passive resistance, and petitioned the government to remove him and replace him with a candidate approved by the tribe.<sup>714</sup>

Avery proved an important ally for Cassacinamon, and he continued as Pequot overseer for several decades. Over the years, he grew very close to the sachem and the “old councilors” of the Mashantucket Pequots, and he was known to have “manifest(ed) a great tenderness” towards the tribe. Avery spoke fluent Pequot, and this linguistic skill only facilitated his closeness with the tribe. Avery’s linguistic abilities mirrored Cassacinamon’s, and were something of a rarity among the English.<sup>715</sup> Not even Winthrop Jr. had spoken Cassacinamon’s language with any fluency. Although it is unclear, this attachment may have crossed lines in ways that other colonials found inappropriate. In October 1678, the General Court passed a law that prohibited English participation in Native ceremonies, which some English feared “doth too much countenance them in those fooleries, if not encourage them in their divill worship.” Despite being told by those “acquainted with their customes” that “their exercises at such times is a principle part of the worship they attend,” the General Court remained unconvinced. “Whereas there is notice taken of some people that doe frequent the meetings of the Indians at their meetings and dances, and doe also joyne with them in their plays [gambling],” the law ordered forbade “all persons in this colony from countenancing the Indians in such meetings.” Individuals who took part in dances were

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<sup>714</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 145-146; *New London County Court, Papers by Subject: Indians, Mashantucket Pequot, 1758-1855*, Connecticut State Archives, Judicial Department, RG003 Box 2. Folders, 8, 9, 11, 19, and 20. Tribal members often petitioned for the same overseers.

<sup>715</sup>John W. Ford, ed., *Some Correspondence between the Governors and Treasurers off the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America the Missionaries of the Colony and Others between the Years 1657 and 1712 to which are added the Journals of the Rev. Experience Mayhew in 1713 and 1714* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 155; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 120; Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 108.



fined forty shillings, while those who participated in “plays” or gambling were fined ten pounds.<sup>716</sup>

The law was another attempt by the English to control and transform Pequot society, but it also illustrated the persistence of Pequot cultural practices. Ceremony remained an important aspect of diplomatic and government procedure for the Pequots and as the work of Eric Spencer Johnson demonstrates, gambling served as a vital tool for the redistribution of goods among the community. The tribute given to sachems was “often lost to others in game of chance” and redistributed amongst the community, thereby binding the sachem and the community together.<sup>717</sup> By employing these measures, Cassacinamon operated within the prescribed parameters of his office, and he likely included Avery in these ceremonies. It is unclear if Avery was ever fined for violating this law, but if he was as close to the Pequots as the evidence suggests, he would have participated in at least some of these ceremonies with Cassacinamon. These actions bound the overseer to the Pequots, and Avery spent his tenure as a strong advocate for Cassacinamon and the tribe.

The law did little to dissuade Avery from his duties, and Cassacinamon relied on their connection to protect Pequot lands. In 1679, the Pequots and Mohegans issued formal petitions for restitution; their crops had once again been destroyed by roaming colonial cattle and swine. The towns blamed the damages on poor Indian fencing, despite the fact that the General Court “acknowledged in the past that some cattle could not be held back with ordinary barriers.” The General Court, in an effort to avoid conflict

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<sup>716</sup>*CR*, III: 23-24.

<sup>717</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 78.

between the tribes and the towns, ordered that fence viewers be appointed to monitor Pequot and Mohegan fields. The ruling also allowed the Pequots to build their own pounds to hold any runaway livestock. Avery and another overseer, James Morgan, were chosen as the Pequots' fence viewers; Morgan would himself build a long term relationship with the tribe. Although no evidence was recovered that states the Pequots utilized these pens, given the relationship between Cassacinamon and Avery, it would not be a surprise if they did. That same year Avery orchestrated a deal with the town of Groton for an additional tract of common land in "behalf of the Pequitt Indians under Cassacinamon."<sup>718</sup>

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The end of King Philip's War did not mean peace for the Pequots, and as one phase of Indian-on-Indian violence ended, another one began. This conflict was a product of the shifting Anglo-Indian frontier, as the Mohawks and New York colony (headed by Governor Edmund Andros) became the new center of regional Anglo-Indian politics. A committed royalist, Andros believed that the Puritans brought about King Philip's War through poor frontier management. In the post-war period, Andros declared "that all Indiyans, who will come in & submit, shall be received to live under the protections of the Government" of New York's proprietor, James, the duke of York. As the duke's representative, Andros administered this new arrangement "to prevent the Puritan colonies from making individual treaties with defeated Algonquian communities."<sup>719</sup> Many Connecticut Algonquians took Andros up on his offer. Fleeing

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<sup>718</sup>CR, III: 43; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 83, 91-92, 145-146.

<sup>719</sup>CR, II: 297-298, 487-488; Pawpeqwenock's Engagement, 16 August 1677, "Wylls Papers," 265-267; "Council Minutes, May 29, 1676," E.B. O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History*

vengeful Puritans out for any Indian blood they could find and Mohawks who often raided their camps, these Algonquians settled in the Mahican village of Schaghticoke, located near Metacom's winter camp at Hoosick.<sup>720</sup> These new Algonquian settlers provided New York with a buffer against the French in Quebec and tightened Albany's hold over the regional Indian trade. Their resettlement also provided Andros oversight of Indian diplomacy in southern New England. Andros wielded that influence over the Puritan colonies with relish. When the Connecticut Council asked Andros for permission to enter New York in August 1676 "to persue and destroy those of the enemies that are in those parts; or doe something effectual yourselfe, for the utter suppression of the enemies in those parts," he refused. He rejected a similar request from Massachusetts Bay with a cool dismissal, telling them that "it is not proper."<sup>721</sup>

Andros may have protected Algonquian refugees from Puritan vengeance but he also needed to protect them from the Mohawks. Although the "Keepers of the Eastern Door" worked with the governor, they also pursued their own interests. The Mohawks launched a series of raids against the New England Algonquians to extend their own power and influence, as well as take captives for adoption and ransom. While not the

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*of New York State*, 14 volumes, (Albany, 1853-1887), 13: 496 (Hereafter *NYCD*); "Council Minutes, May 30, 1676," *NYCD*, 13: 496-497; "Andros to Albany, July 12, 1677," in *The Andros Papers: Files of the Provincial Secretary of New York during the Administration of Sir Edmund Andros, 1674-1680*, ed. Peter R. Christoph and Florence A. Christoph, 3 volumes (Syracuse, NY: 1989), 2: 72-73; Oberg, *Uncas*, 195; Michael Oberg, *Dominion & Civility: English Imperialism & Native America, 1585-1685* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 165.

<sup>720</sup>Stephen Saunders Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence* (New York: 1984), 357-358; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 165.

<sup>721</sup>"Connecticut Council to Andros, August 19, 1676," *CR*, II: 470-471; "Connecticut Council to Andros, September 24, 1677," in "The Wyllys Papers: Correspondence and Documents Chiefly of Descendants of Gov. George Wyllys of Connecticut, 1590-1796," *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* 21 (1924): 267-268; Council Minutes, 8 September 1676, *NYCD*, 13: 501; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 165-166.

conflagration of the previous war, the Mohawk raids threatened the fragile peace. Cassacinamon and the Pequots fell victim to these Mohawk raids, and they demanded justice. Cassacinamon appealed to his Connecticut allies for aid. In July 1677, Cassacinamon and Daniel petitioned the Connecticut Council that “they may be permitted to strengthen themselves by engaging the freind Indians of the English, one with another to defend themselves against a common enemy.” It was a smart political move on Cassacinamon’s part; he played along with English expectations of dependence, while seeking their support for an Indian defensive alliance. The “friend Indians” of the English included the Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansett-Niantics. Connecticut authorities were cautious in their response. They told the Pequot sachem that while they had “a good respect for all their freind Indians, and are willing that they should be unanimous in aposing any common enemy,” the Council stated that “all such Indians that they should stand upon their guard and defend themselves, and not begin to manage any offensive war, before the matter be heard and considered by the Council.” The Council granted Cassacinamon “ten pownd of powder and bullets or lead proportionable...to be kept in his forte as a magazeen for their necessary defence.”<sup>722</sup> The fort in question was Monhantic Fort. While he did not get everything he wanted, it was clear that Cassacinamon still held influence among Connecticut officials. Yet, the General Court’s decision was symptomatic of the noticeable shift in Anglo-Indian politics.

The Mohawk-Algonquian confrontation was settled not in New England, but in New York. Andros, in his new role as regional intermediary, invited New England

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<sup>722</sup>CR, II: 500.

delegates to meet with the Indians settled under his protection. The Mohawks agreed to halt their raids against the friendly New England Algonquians, make peace with the Mahicans, and instead fight the Abenakis (who battled settlers in northern New England). The New Englanders surrendered their right to treat with New York tribes independently. The Mohawks insisted that all negotiations take place in Albany, presided by Governor Andros.<sup>723</sup>

The decision disappointed Cassacinamon and the other “friend Indians” of New England. While Cassacinamon appreciated the weapons he received, the Council’s adamant stance that the Connecticut Algonquians only defend themselves but not retaliate, challenged indigenous notions of pride. This remained a sticking point three years later, after the dust had settled with the Mohawks. In May 1680, “Uncass Cassasinamon & the rest of the chife with them” petitioned Connecticut authorities once again. The Algonquians reminded Connecticut that “the Mohauks about 3 yeres Since gave them molestation and part afright and disgust upon them in that they seized sundry Indians...and conveighed them away.” They demanded restitution for this, as well as payback for the insults the Mohawks hurled at them during the raids. The Mohawks used gendered insults, telling the Algonquians that “they are but as so many Squas and are afraid of them.” This taunt not only struck at Native notions of masculinity, it offered a clue as to how the Mohawks viewed their neighbors within their expanding sphere of

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<sup>723</sup>CR, 10 April 1677, 2: 482; Order in Council, 28 March 1677, *NYCD*, 13: 504, 528-530; Webb, 1676, 357-358; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 166. See also Lawrence H. Leder, ed., *The Livingston Indian Records, 1666-1723* (Gettysburg, PA: 1956), 39-40.

influence. Connecticut officials denied them their request.<sup>724</sup> In the interest of regional peace, Connecticut authorities deemed it necessary that the matter just be dropped.

Despite the harassment by the Mohawks and Andros's offer, Cassacinamon and the Pequots remained in Connecticut. While Cassacinamon had established connections with New York Indians during his previous diplomatic forays in the area, the sachem expressed no real desire to relocate to Andros's domain. Cassacinamon repeatedly used the threat of relocating to force concessions out of Connecticut officials, and that tactic met with success. However, when presented with a genuine offer at relocation, the tribe refused to move. Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots had risked much to return to their homeland; the prospect of abandoning did not appeal to the Pequots in the seventeenth century, no matter the difficulties they faced.<sup>725</sup>

In this new Anglo-Indian reality, the Anglo-Iroquoian frontier replaced the Anglo-Algonquian one in terms of regional importance. The Covenant Chain between New York and the Iroquois solidified this fact.<sup>726</sup> The treaties of the Covenant Chain melded Iroquois and English diplomatic councils and political objectives, and bound the Iroquois and New York together in a mutually beneficial arrangement. The alliance

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<sup>724</sup>*Indian Papers*, ser. 1 (1647-1759), Volume 1, Connecticut State Archives (Hartford, CT), 1: 39 (Hereafter *Indian Papers*).

<sup>725</sup>At the end of the eighteenth century, over half of the Mashantucket Pequot population joined the Brotherton Indian Movement. These Christian converts left the reservation and Connecticut to escape the encroachments they faced by Euro-Americans. Those Mashantucket Pequots who stayed behind protected the reservation as best they could. Contemporary tribal members are descended from those Pequots who remained in Connecticut. McBride, "Legacy," 90; Kevin McBride, "'Desirous to Improve After the European Manner': The Mashantucket Pequots and the Brotherton Movement," unpublished manuscript, 1996.

<sup>726</sup>Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 136-137; Webb, 1676, 359. See also Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984).

brought the Iroquois English support, secured the southern and eastern borders of Iroquois territory, and provided the Five Nations “access to thousands of potential allies settled under their protection” in New York.<sup>727</sup> English officials guaranteed the Iroquois hunters and warriors access to Albany markets, where they could sell their furs at higher prices than were offered in New France. In return, Governor Andros placed Albany at the center of regional Anglo-Indian relations, and English influence among the Iroquois increased while French influence declined. From 1677 to 1755, the Covenant Chain secured peace for New York and New England’s established settlements, and “opened the west to English settlement.” It organized trade arrangements between the colonials and various tribes, and arranged for the “systemic retreats of Indians from defeats in New England and the southern colonies into sanctuaries in New York, Pennsylvania, and Iroquoia.” The Chain also “covered the peaceful retreat of Indians from eastern Pennsylvania to the Ohio region beyond the Appalachians.” These negotiations opened many new lands for colonial settlement. The structure and rituals of the Covenant Chain placed the Iroquois in a position of regional leadership. Subsequent treaty arrangements between the Iroquois and other tribes bound them together in a system of mutual obligation and reciprocity, one in which placed the Iroquois as the dominant partner in the arrangements.<sup>728</sup> The Pequots survived this transition, just as they survived the other upheavals of the seventeenth-century. But as the Mohawk crisis demonstrated, while Cassacinamon and the Pequots did not directly shape these political transitions, they felt their impact in significant ways.

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<sup>727</sup>Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 221.

<sup>728</sup>Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, xvii-xviii, 8, 374-375; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 221; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 136-137; Webb, *1676*, 359, 410-412; John Wolfe Lydekker, *The Faithful Mohawks* (Port Washington, NY: 1968), 4.

## II

In the midst of these dramatic political upheavals, Cassacinamon and the Pequots remained firmly within Connecticut's sphere of influence. Yet, even in this new political reality, Cassacinamon and the Mashantucket Pequots exercised certain options and retained protections that shielded them from the extreme elements of this shifting political arrangement. As they had done for decades, the Pequots operated within the gaps of these various political agents and agendas. By the 1680s, Cassacinamon's long-standing relationship with Connecticut ensured that for quite some time, good-will existed between the Pequots and Connecticut. However, the shifting Anglo-Iroquoian frontier effected the Pequots in other ways besides the raids. It unleashed an internal power struggle among the Pequots. For the first time in decades, Cassacinamon faced a substantial challenge to his authority as sachem. This challenger emerged not from within the Mashantucket group; Cassacinamon had long-established his authority among them. The challenge rose out of the eastern Pawcatuck group: Mamaho, sachem of the Pawcatuck Pequots.

In the 1670s, Mamaho served as chief counselor to Wequashcook/Herman Garrett, Cassacinamon's Pawcatuck counterpart. Mamaho was to Herman Garrett what Daniel was to Cassacinamon. The Pequot Laws of 1675 recognized Mamaho as a leading Pequot, and during King Philip's War, Mamaho served alongside Cassacinamon in several wartime engagements. Both men led Pequot warriors into battle, and both were singled out by the English for their skills and abilities. It was to Cassacinamon and Mamaho that the English pledged to "protect their [Pequot] wives and children."<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>729</sup>*CR*, II: 346, 575; *CA*, Colonial War 1: 6, 17; "The General Court of Connecticut to Wait Winthrop, July 12, 1675," *MHSC*, 6<sup>th</sup> series (1892), V: 4.



Mamaho's leadership ability and charismatic presence soon eclipsed that of Herman Garrett's own son, Catazapet. Catazapet joined Cassacinamon and Owaneco in ritually dispatching the Narragansett sachem Canonchet during King Philip's War, but that episode did not translate into long-term political power for Catazapet.<sup>730</sup> In September 1676, Herman Garrett renewed a land claims petition for the Pawcatuck Pequots. The Pawcatuck leader not only expressed his desire for more land for his people, he also emphasized how he, Catazapet, and the Pawcatuck group had been loyal to the English. He hoped they would be rewarded for that loyalty.<sup>731</sup> Herman Garrett died in 1678, but it was not Catazapet who succeeded him. In May 1678, Catazapet petitioned Connecticut authorities that he was the heir of his father's land rights and authority, but he was rebuffed. In May 1684, Catazapet complained that Mamaho was "takeing and withdraweing his men from their obedience to him [Catazapet]." It did not make a difference. It was clear to both the Pawcatuck Pequots and Connecticut authorities that Mamaho was the recognized Pawcatuck leader.<sup>732</sup>

Mamaho quickly made a name for himself by wielding his power in much the same way Cassacinamon had done during his rise to prominence. The Pawcatuck sachem employed the same strategies to consolidate his power base among the Pequots. Throughout the late 1670s and 1680s, Mamaho filed petitions with the General Court and worked with the Pequot overseers to secure his group's land base, and advocated on

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<sup>730</sup>John William De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut from the earliest known period to 1850* (Hartford, 1851), 282-283.

<sup>731</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 29.

<sup>732</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 36; *CR*, III: 144.

behalf of his people in legal matters to ensure they received justice.<sup>733</sup> Mamaho's rising star attracted not only Pawcatuck Pequots to him, but Mashantucket Pequots as well. In May 1678, several Mashantucket Pequots petitioned the General Court "to Shift" from "Cassacinamons Authority" to Mamaho's. The petitioners told Connecticut authorities that they had originally been from the Pawcatuck group, but had moved to Mashantucket. They now wished to move back to Mamaho. Connecticut authorities were puzzled, and asked, "hath Robbin done you any wrong"? The petitioners were silent, "mute, being ashamed of the proposal." As Cassacinamon had not done them any harm or mistreated them in any way, they were dismissed with a question, "if he hath done you none then why do you trouble us with such propositions"?<sup>734</sup>

However, that was not the only incident of relocating Pequots. In 1680, Cassacinamon complained to Connecticut officials that "Indians that belong to his govern<sup>t</sup> scatter into sundry townes contrary to his minde." The Pequot sachem worried that these scattered settlements "are not so capable to defend themselves," a reasonable concern given the lingering fear of Mohawk raids.<sup>735</sup> However, concern for his people's welfare was not the only matter at hand. Cassacinamon informed authorities "that he cannot take that care and watch that otherwise he might do, and therefore desires that if damage be done to y<sup>e</sup> English by their hogs or cattle that he may not be accountable for it, but for the Indian town so removed." Cassacinamon then requested English assistance in bringing those communities back into his sphere of influence. The sachem asked that "they be commanded to live near him, that so he may inspect them." The General Court

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<sup>733</sup>CR, IV: 8, 31, 54, 82, 100, and 103.

<sup>734</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 36.

<sup>735</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 39; CR, III: 55.

sided with Cassacinamon and ordered James Avery and others “to acquaint the sayd Pequot Indians under Robert’s government, to return to his town as soon as planting and weeding is over, and continue to be under Robert’s government as formerly.”<sup>736</sup>

Cassacinamon’s request appears to have been answered, as there were no subsequent complaints by the sachem concerning this matter. If these issues came up after 1680, they were handled away from colonial eyes.

It is not known whether the Pequots Cassacinamon complained about were the same Pequots who petitioned to move to Mamaho’s jurisdiction. However, given the proximity of the events, it is a strong possibility. Taken on their own, these shifting residence patterns were not an unusual event among New England Algonquians.

Mobility was a powerful strategy employed by Native peoples, who moved due to marriages and to be close to kin. Married couples established residences in communities that “provided them with the most advantageous situation, such as social standing and economic support from family members.”<sup>737</sup> Mobility also had political implications, as people sometimes relocated so as to be closer to a preferred leader. It gave Native peoples the ability to literally vote with their feet.<sup>738</sup>

But why after several decades would this be a concern or problem for Cassacinamon? He knew from personal experience how powerful mobility could be if

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<sup>736</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 39; *CR*, III: 55.

<sup>737</sup>Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 219. In her work, Holmes references the work of Rose Oldfield Hayes to discuss a “governing principle” based on “utility,” where married couples opted to live on the reservation where they possess land rights. See Rose Oldfield Hayes, “Ethnographic Studies of the Shinnecock; Shinnecock Land Ownership and Use: Prehistoric and Colonial Influences on Modern Adaptive Modes,” in *The Shinnecock Indians: A Culture History*, Gaynell Stone, ed. (Stony Brook, NY: Suffolk County Archaeological Association and Lexington, MA: Ginn Custom Publishing, 1983).

<sup>738</sup>Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 28-32, 84, 255; Holmes, “In Behalf of Myself & My People,” 139-142.

used as a political strategy. These strategies of mobility and shifting residence patterns were some of the first successful tactics Cassacinamon had used in his campaign to remove his people from Uncas.<sup>739</sup> Mamaho successfully employed this strategy against Cassacinamon and Catazapet, making him a true challenge to Cassacinamon. These episodes suggest that Cassacinamon's power and influence waned for a brief period at the end of the 1670s, likely due to the stress caused by the Mohawk raids. In 1678, Cassacinamon and Connecticut reaffirmed the Pequot Laws "at a great concourse amongst the Pequitts." Cassacinamon attended, as did Catazapet, Mamaho, and Ninigret's daughter, "the Naragansett sunk squaw and her councill." The conference confirmed the same laws and provisions, including the benefits given to the sachems/governors. However, Connecticut officials noted that "the forepart, which respects Robin's own intrest, was earnestly desired by Robin not to bee published as yett."<sup>740</sup> The Pequots expected their sachem to protect them, and if Cassacinamon could not stop the raids, he may have, in their minds, faltered in his duties. Mamaho, younger and more energetic than the aging Cassacinamon, perhaps struck some Pequots as a more appealing prospect. Whatever the reason, Cassacinamon considered these shifting residence patterns to be a threat to his authority, and Cassacinamon dealt with Mamaho by calling upon his powerful Connecticut allies to reinforce his authority.

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<sup>739</sup>Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, 6:67; "List of the Pequot Indians at Pequot Plantation about the Time of the Settlement 1646," Eva Butler MSS, Indian and Colonial Research Center (ICRC), (Mystic, CT); Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 2: 520; "The Humble Petition of Casamon and Obechiquod in the Name and Behalfe of the Pequots Dwelling at Namyok," July 1647, Acts of the Commissioners of the United Colonies of New England 1643-1651, in *Plymouth Colonial Records*, Vol. IX (Boston: William White, 1859; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1968), I: 99 (Hereafter *Acts*); McBride, "Legacy," 83.

<sup>740</sup>*CR*, II: 576.

The issues between Cassacinamon and Mamaho paralleled the earlier disagreements between Cassacinamon and Wequashcook in the late 1640s.<sup>741</sup> Although the Pequots were separated into two branches that acted independently at times, ultimately, Cassacinamon served as the surviving Pequots' grand sachem. The Wequashcook episode reaffirmed the Pequots' leadership hierarchy, with Cassacinamon at its apex. The ruling that Cassacinamon obtained in 1680 to keep the Pequots under his authority served the same purpose. Cassacinamon realized how effective mobility was as a political strategy, having employed it himself. It stands to reason he would not want someone like Mamaho using it against him. In turning to his long-time English allies to reinforce his authority among the Pequots, Cassacinamon once again proved that he not only had the proper lineage to be sachem, he also possessed the strongest allies around to support his decisions and desires.<sup>742</sup>

Yet it appears that any personal or political conflicts between Cassacinamon and Mamaho were neither long-lasting nor bitter. The two sachems, and the two Pequot groups, continued to be intertwined with one another. The settlement patterns demonstrated this fact. The movement of Pequots between Mashantucket and Pawcatuck was likely a manifestation of marriages that took place between the two groups. These shifts reflected the continued establishment of family and kin networks as well as

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<sup>741</sup>“John Mason to John Winthrop, Jr., March 11, 1648[49],” *Winthrop Papers*, 1645-49, ed. Allyn B. Forbes (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1947), 5: 318 (Hereafter *WP*). Wequashcook had led the Pawcatuck group, but when he tried to undercut Cassacinamon's own efforts, Cassacinamon and John Winthrop Jr. captured and held Wequashcook under house arrest. What was discussed during those days is unknown, but when Wequashcook was released, Winthrop, Jr. began advocating for the Pawcatuck Pequots as well as the Mashantucket group. Most importantly, Wequashcook no longer challenged Cassacinamon.

<sup>742</sup>Eric Spencer Johnson analyzed how seventeenth century Algonquian sachems in New England used strategic alliances with the English to legitimize their authority among their people. Johnson, “Some by Flatteries,” 123.

residence patterns that went undetected by most colonial officials.<sup>743</sup> These kin connections reached the top of Pequot society, a reality made clear when Robin Cassacinamon chose his successor. At some point during his final years, Cassacinamon selected a young man named Kutchamaquan to succeed him as sachem.<sup>744</sup>

Cassacinamon's choice had clear political and social implications for the Pequots. Kutchamaquan was Mamaho's son, and the young man also had the support of the elders and "the old councillors" of both the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots.<sup>745</sup> Cassacinamon's choice, coupled with the Pequot settlement patterns, illustrates that the social and political connections between the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots remained strong. Cassacinamon operated within traditional Algonquian understandings of the sachemship, specifically as it related to the issue of eligibility. In order to become a sachem, an individual had to demonstrate ability, and claim the necessary family lineage.<sup>746</sup> That Cassacinamon chose Kutchamaquan above all others, even his own children if he had them, suggests that he not only saw the young man's potential for the office, but that the two were quite possibly kin. If true, ties of kinship and family between Cassacinamon and Mamaho may have smoothed over any possible hard feelings. Either way, Cassacinamon's relationship with Mamaho and Kutchamaquan demonstrated that the ties binding the Mashantucket Pequots and the Pawcatuck Pequots — in leadership and populations — remained entrenched.

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<sup>743</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 142.

<sup>744</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 44; McBride, "Legacy," 88.

<sup>745</sup>*CR*, IV: 202; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 141, 143.

<sup>746</sup>William A. Starna, "The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, edited by Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 40-42.

### III

Even as Cassacinamon resolved his leadership crisis, his English allies experienced political upheavals of their own. Despite his success in establishing the Anglo-Iroquois alliance, Edmund Andros never ceased his attempts to control the New England colonies. Andros's disdain for the Puritan colonies (particularly Massachusetts) was well known; he disparaged their attempts at Indian policy and at one point during King Philip's War, he attempted to seize control of Connecticut.<sup>747</sup> His plan failed, due in part to the efforts of John Winthrop Jr. to defuse the situation, but relations between Andros and New England remained strained.

After King Philip's War, Andros's authority grew beyond the realm of Anglo-Indian relations. Andros and other royal officials still desired to extend Crown authority over New England, and after the war they renewed their efforts. Massachusetts Bay drew most of the royal attention, as it openly flaunted royal efforts at incorporation. The late 1670s and early 1680s were marked by dramatic contests between the New Englanders and the Crown. Efforts to revive the United Colonies fell flat, while royal attempts at exerting its authority grew bolder. Charles II removed New Hampshire from Massachusetts jurisdiction and established a royal government there in 1679, while in 1680 royal agents opposed efforts by Massachusetts to reestablish its authority in Maine. In 1684, Charles II revoked Massachusetts Bay's charter due to their insubordination, and

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<sup>747</sup>Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1975), 307-308.

their refusal to comply with navigation, tariff, and trade laws. As a result of this action, the United Colonies collapsed.<sup>748</sup>

In 1685, Charles II died; he was succeeded by his Catholic brother, James II. More authoritarian than his brother, James was determined to bring New England into royal orbit. In 1686, James created the “Dominion of New England,” an organization designed to join the New England colonies and New York into one administrative body. The Dominion was created to enforce the Navigation Acts and served as a mutual defense pact to protect the colonies from the French and hostile Native American tribes. Edmund Andros was selected to administer the Dominion, and entered Boston accompanied by two foot-companies late in 1686.<sup>749</sup> Massachusetts immediately balked at this action, but it was not alone. Connecticut officials — led by Governor Robert Treat, John Allyn, and James Fitch — desired their independence. They hoped that the colony’s previous good relations with the Stuart monarchy, carefully cultivated by John Winthrop Jr., would spare them from the Dominion but it only delayed the inevitable. On October 27, 1687, Governor Andros marched into Hartford and formally annexed the River Colony into the Dominion. He then appointed Treat and Allyn to the Council of the Dominion of New England.<sup>750</sup>

However, Connecticut’s involvement with the Dominion proved short-lived. In the spring of 1689, word reached the colonies that the Glorious Revolution had deposed

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<sup>748</sup>Harry M. Ward, *The United Colonies of New England, 1643-1690* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), 312-342; Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 244-253.

<sup>749</sup>W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (Vaduz: Kraus Reprint, 1964), 12: 233, item 832 (Hereafter *CSPCS*); Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 250; Ward, *United Colonies*, 329-331.

<sup>750</sup>Ward, *United Colonies*, 332; David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York: 1972), 203-04, 248-50; Albert E. Van Dusen, *Connecticut* (New York: 1961), chapter 5.



James II and replaced him with the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. In short order, the Dominion of New England collapsed. On April 18, 1689, Massachusetts colonials seized and imprisoned Andros and other royal officials; Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Plymouth all restored their charter governments.<sup>751</sup> Elections were held in Hartford on May 9, 1689, and the Connecticut freemen voted to restore their old charter government, as well as reinstate Treat and the former government officials. However, confusion and fear lingered as to the legitimacy of the charter. After the previous royal court annulled the charter, some within the Connecticut government wondered if the document was valid. In 1693, Fitz-John Winthrop traveled to England to petition the monarchs William and Mary for a royal charter; his mission paralleled that of his father, John Winthrop Jr., thirty years earlier. And, like his father, Fitz-John succeeded. The monarchs reconfirmed Connecticut's 1662 charter.<sup>752</sup>

#### IV

Cassacinamon did not live to see his ally's success. In October 1692, word reached the Connecticut General Court that Robin Cassacinamon, the old Pequot sachem, had died.<sup>753</sup> His death, like his birth, remains a mystery; only the year of his death can be confirmed with any certainty. If the assumptions placing his birth in the 1620s are in any way accurate, the sachem was an elder in his early seventies when he died. However, no reliable account of his final days exists. One version, recorded decades later in the eighteenth century by Congregationalist minister, and later Yale president, Ezra Stiles, is

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<sup>751</sup>Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King*, 255.

<sup>752</sup>Ward, *United Colonies*, 332-337; David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (New York: 1972), 203-04, 248-50; Albert E. Van Dusen, *Connecticut* (New York: 1961), chapter 5.

<sup>753</sup>*CR*, IV: 86.

difficult to believe. According to this account, Cassacinamon's death allegedly involved a scandal with the family of his old rival Uncas, specifically two of Uncas's children, an unnamed daughter and his youngest son Ben Uncas. Overcome with rage during an argument, Cassacinamon reportedly threw a boiling pot of succotash on the breast of the Mohegan woman, inflicting a grave wound that killed her. Cassacinamon was then arrested and jailed at New London. As this was an Indian-on-Indian crime, Connecticut authorities turned Cassacinamon over to Uncas, and let him settle the matter. The English left the Pequot to Mohegan justice, which in this case, meant execution. Ben Uncas then shot and killed Robin Cassacinamon in retaliation for his sister's death.<sup>754</sup>

This scenario is unlikely for several reasons. First, the dates do not correspond with what is known about the lives of Cassacinamon, Uncas, and the other participants.<sup>755</sup> The only reliable information in the account is the year of Cassacinamon's death, as that can be corroborated with other sources. The rest of the story is implausible, namely because Uncas himself had died sometime between June 1683 and June 1684.<sup>756</sup> The Mohegan grand sachem could not have condemned Cassacinamon to any sort of fate, unless he did it from beyond the grave. Presumably, Ben Uncas figures prominently in the account because he was the brother of the woman in question, and because he and his son, also named Ben Uncas, each served as Mohegan grand sachem. However, the son who succeeded Uncas, and who held the position in 1692, was the warrior Owaneco.

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<sup>754</sup>Stiles *Miscellaneous, 1757-1762*, 596-598; Ottery and Ottery, *A Man Called Samson*, 66; McBride, "July 2008," interview by author.

<sup>755</sup>Ottery and Ottery, *A Man Called Samson*, 66.

<sup>756</sup>CR, IV: 86; Sachems of Mohegan to Samuel Chester, 13 June 1683, in Butler, ed., "Indian Related Materials," 24; Uncas, Owaneco, and Josiah, Deed to Ralph Parker, 13 June 1683, *ibid.*, 25; Owaneco, Land Grant, 6 March 1683/4, *Indian Papers*, 1: 40; Caulkins, *Norwich*, 426; Oberg, *Uncas*, 202-203.

Owaneco held the title until his death in 1703, when he was succeeded by his brother Caesar. The first and second Ben Uncas did not serve as Mohegan sachems until well into the eighteenth century, from 1723 to 1726 and from 1726 to the early 1730s, respectively. After Ben Uncas II, Owaneco's son Mahomet became the leader recognized by the majority of Mohegans.<sup>757</sup> However, the issue of Mohegan succession remains so unclear in the story that, when added to the discrepancy over Uncas, severe doubts are cast on this tale.

The power and social dynamics related in the story suggest that Cassacinamon was still a subject sachem within the Mohegan confederation, and by 1692 that was definitely not the case.<sup>758</sup> The crime is also presented as a domestic dispute; Cassacinamon and the Mohegan woman were at home while a meal was being prepared. Domestic relationships between Native men and women often went unrecorded or unappreciated by English observers, but such an outburst of violence seems out of character compared to what is known about Cassacinamon. This scenario suggests that Cassacinamon either married or cohabitated with a daughter of Uncas. Marriages often sealed alliances in seventeenth-century Native New England communities; Uncas himself used the tactic extensively in his expansion of the Mohegan confederation in order to incorporate the Pequots.<sup>759</sup> Yet, if Cassacinamon had been married or connected to a daughter of Uncas, such a marriage may have been mentioned much earlier than 1692. It

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<sup>757</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 210; Laura Murray, ed., *To Do Good to My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 36; De Forest, *Indians*, 318.

<sup>758</sup>Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 132-138.

<sup>759</sup>For an in-depth analysis of marriage as a political strategy among Native communities, see Johnson, "Some by Flatteries," 164-187.

would have cast the personal struggles between Cassacinamon and Uncas in a new light, and it seems unlikely that such a connection would have gone unnoticed in the myriad petitions issued by the sachems during those decades.

In some ways, the execution presented in the account seems patterned after the execution of Miantonomi in 1643, when the Commissioners of the United Colonies turned the Narragansett sachem over to Uncas for execution, saying it was an “Indian matter.”<sup>760</sup> But this was no longer the New England of 1643, and the power dynamics between Anglo and Algonquian communities far different. After King Philip’s War, colonial authorities could extend their power and authority over the New England Algonquians in ways they could not before the war. It is unlikely that such a major incident concerning Algonquians whom Connecticut considered under their jurisdiction would have escaped the notice of Connecticut authorities. Instead, the Connecticut General Court simply said that “Whereas Cassinimon is deceased and the Pequots thereby destitute of a present Governo<sup>r</sup>, this Court doe nominate, appoint, and impower, Daniell and Mamohoe to be chiefe rulers and governo<sup>rs</sup> of the Pequotts.”<sup>761</sup> Taken on its own, the fact that Connecticut officials do not mention precisely how or when Cassacinamon died does not prove or disprove the assertions made in the account. However, combined with the other questionable aspects, these omissions cast considerable doubts over the veracity of the account.

The Mashantucket Pequots do not acknowledge any negativity surrounding Cassacinamon’s death. This is not unexpected given his importance to the tribe. What

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<sup>760</sup>Oberg, *Uncas*, 104-107; Oberg, *Dominion & Civility*, 119-120.

<sup>761</sup>*CR*, IV: 86.

the Pequots remembered, in the years following the sachem's death and well-into the modern era, was the authority and reverence associated with Cassacinamon's memory, his mark, and his name among the tribe. Cassacinamon's death left a large void among the Pequots: he had been the sole leader of the Mashantucket Pequots since the 1640s, and he had guided them through years of uncertainty and trouble to a much more stable place within the colonial world. Thanks to Cassacinamon's leadership, the Pequots returned to their traditional lands, and lived in their own communities headed by their own councils. These were not minor successes, and it soon fell to subsequent generations to protect them as best they could. They relied on methods Cassacinamon had mastered: alliances, legal claims and petitions, and the affirmation of community ties.<sup>762</sup>

After Cassacinamon died in 1692, Pequot and Connecticut authorities backed Daniel as leader of the Mashantucket Pequots, while Mamaho was once again affirmed as the leader of the Pawcatuck Pequots.<sup>763</sup> Daniel acted as a "regent" of sorts for Cassacinamon's chosen successor, Mamaho's son Kutchamaquan. Although Kutchamaquan had the support of "the old councillors" of both the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots, at the time of Cassacinamon's death, he was still too young to serve as sachem.<sup>764</sup> As examined earlier in the chapter, Cassacinamon's choice of Kutchamaquan, coupled with the Pequot settlement patterns in the 1680s, had clear political and social implications for the Pequots. It demonstrated the deep connections

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<sup>762</sup>For an examination of how these strategies and Cassacinamon's legacy were used in the eighteenth century, see Sarah Louise Holmes, "'In Behalf of Myself & My People': Mashantucket Pequot Strategies in Defense of Their Land Rights," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Connecticut 2007.

<sup>763</sup>*CR*, IV: 86.

<sup>764</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 44; *CR*, IV: 202; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 141, 143; McBride, "Legacy," 88.

between the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots, despite their legal separation under Connecticut jurisdiction.

Daniel served as Cassacinamon's chief counselor, and the English felt he would be a suitable governor until Kutchamaquan came of age. The only community satisfied with the choice of Daniel as governor was Daniel's; other Pequots were unhappy with the situation, and they bided their time until Kutchamaquan became sachem. Unfortunately, Daniel died two years later. Daniel's death compounded the loss of Cassacinamon, and it initiated a crisis of leadership that divided the Mashantucket Pequots into two rival political camps. A man by the name of Scattup (Schadabe), was chosen by the Connecticut General Court to be Daniel's replacement in 1694, a decision that was immediately opposed by Kutchamaquan's supporters. For the next several years, Scattup, Kutchamaquan, and their supporters vied for the right to lead the Pequots.<sup>765</sup>

During this battle over Cassacinamon's rightful successor, colonial authorities emerged as an important factor in the selection process. While Cassacinamon lived, he had operated within the traditional rules and guidelines of the sachemship.<sup>766</sup> During Cassacinamon's tenure as sachem, the English simply affirmed the Pequots' choice of leader. Cassacinamon possessed the necessary family lineage to hold the office, while his leadership abilities, political skills, and personal alliances satisfied both the Pequot and English requirements for leadership. By the 1690s, this situation had changed. In

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<sup>765</sup>*CR*, IV: 122; *Indian Papers*, 1: 100-101, 108; McBride, "Ancient and Crazie," 67-66; Kevin A. McBride, "Where Our Fathers and Grandfathers Dwelled: Social Implications of a Seventeenth Century Mashantucket Pequot Cemetery" (paper presented at the Conference on New England, Annual Meeting, Sturbridge, MA, 1991).

<sup>766</sup>Starna, "The Pequots in the Early Seventeenth Century," 40-42.

this English-dominated New England, Connecticut asserted greater influence over the Pequots.

By backing the Daniel/Scattup faction, Connecticut authorities obstructed Pequot reunification. Kutchamaquan had supporters in both Mashantucket and Pawcatuck, while Scattup's Pequot support came only from Mashantucket.<sup>767</sup> Factionalism among Native Americans had been a common social and political phenomenon. However, without a unifying figure like Cassacinamon, factionalism led to fragmentation. Scattup, like Cassacinamon before him, courted the support of powerful allies in the Connecticut. Scattup worked closely with Pequot overseers like James Avery and James Morgan, and to some extent replicated the Cassacinamon-Winthrop alliance.<sup>768</sup> Like Cassacinamon, Scattup used those alliances for his own agenda, and Daniel and Scattup were not without Pequot followers of their own. Their strongest support came from their own village/community in Mashantucket and at least one of the Pequot counselors, a man by the name of Pisshaweno, who probably came from Scattup's town. However, while they were clearly powerful and influential within the tribe, it appears that Daniel and Scattup did not possess the traditional lineage necessary for the Pequot sachemship.<sup>769</sup> By backing the Daniel/Scattup faction, Connecticut authorities influenced internal Pequot politics in ways they were incapable of doing during Cassacinamon's lifetime. For an enterprising individual like Scattup, Connecticut authorities presented an opportunity for

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<sup>767</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 144.

<sup>768</sup>While Scattup at first worked with both James Avery and John Morgan, he eventually came to favor Morgan. The Scattup-Avery relationship deteriorated due to Avery siding with the Kutchamaquan/Cassacinamon II during the eighteenth century. Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 145-146.

<sup>769</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 141-146; McBride, "Legacy," 87.

leadership that would not have been possible under earlier Algonquian systems, or during the earlier Anglo-Algonquian frontier.

This lack of traditional credentials proved a major source of contention for Kutchamaquan's supporters. The majority of Pequots supported Kutchamaquan's claims. He was Cassacinamon's choice, and even Daniel supported this; Daniel made Kutchamaquan his heir and left the young man his land rights. The General Court recognized and honored that request.<sup>770</sup> In 1694, the "Concill of the Pequots...in the name of y<sup>e</sup> greatest part of y<sup>e</sup> Pequots ancient men & young men," petitioned the Connecticut General Court. The councilors invoked Cassacinamon in their petition, telling the English that "the greate Sachem y<sup>t</sup> we hon<sup>rd</sup> & Loved declared at his death that Cisshamaquen (Kutchamaquan), Mamohos son, should succeed as sachem as his will and desire, & Left his estate to him, most of it." In 1701, the councilors and old men petitioned the Connecticut General Court once again, and declared that their dissent was legitimate. They informed the Court that they were "the Old Stock from whence The other indeans swarmed," and that Kutchamaquan was the proper choice for the sachemship based upon their own criteria. The Pequot elders requested that the General Court "Grant them A Sachem to be head over them According to their own Choyce." They then asked that they and Kutchamaquan "be not denigrated and made inferior to Scattob and his Associates." The Pequot councilors asserted that Kutchamaquan's right to the sachemship was "bequithed to them as a legacy of Robin Cassasinamon after his death."<sup>771</sup>

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<sup>770</sup>CR, IV: 123

<sup>771</sup>*Robert C. Winthrop Manuscript Collection*, Connecticut State Archives, 1: 147 (Hereafter RCW); Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 141.



Connecticut authorities were in a bind. They wanted peace among the Pequots, but they also wanted to keep the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck groups separate. The Connecticut General Court agreed that Kutchamaquan was entitled to the estate and material wealth bequeathed to him by Cassacinamon and Daniel. However, the General Court also knew that the faction that supported Kutchamaquan desired that the Mashantucket and Pawcatuck Pequots be reunited, and it could not let that happen.<sup>772</sup> For the English, Scattup was the better choice; his power base was only within Mashantucket. Scattup refused to give up his governorship, and he continued to assert his position as Pequot leader. The Pequot elders continued to support Kutchamaquan. Eventually, a compromise was reached. Scattup remained governor/sachem, while Kutchamaquan became Scattup's chief counselor. This compromise neutralized the political factionalism at Mashantucket until the 1720s.<sup>773</sup>

The fission that occurred after Cassacinamon's death was, in a way, a testament to his ability as a leader to direct and coordinate these Pequot factions. Cassacinamon's abilities as a sachem were clearly powerful. He held the Pequot communities together for most of his life through the most trying of times. While the factionalism that took place after his death was troublesome, the Pequots still looked to Cassacinamon as a symbolic figure to build peace among the people. Pequot leaders invoked Cassacinamon's memory, his tactics, and the specter of his authority to justify their claims to the sachemship well into the eighteenth century. Scattup and Kutchamaquan each formed

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<sup>772</sup>In 1697, the Connecticut General Court ruled that "the old councellors of Ketshawmuequin shall peaceably enjoy their improvements within the township of Newlondon, and Kishawmaquin shall peaceably enjoy the lands and rites that Danll left him by his will. And these councellors are not to act any thing as to government within the bounds of New London." *CR*, IV: 202; McBride, "Ancient and Crazie," 67-68; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 143-144; McBride, "Legacy," 88-91.

<sup>773</sup>Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 143-144; McBride, "Legacy," 88-91.

strong alliances with English official overseers and cultivated ties to the Connecticut political system; Scattup allied with John Morgan and Kutchamaquan bonded with James Avery.<sup>774</sup> Given Avery's previous relationship with Cassacinamon, it is not surprising that he sided with Cassacinamon's preferred successor. Both Pequot leaders issued petitions and legal claims to justify their positions and seek redress of grievances. Scattup used Cassacinamon's distinctive mark to sign documents as the Pequots' leader. At some point during the leadership struggle, Kutchamaquan changed his name to "Robin Cassacinamon II," and he used this name throughout the eighteenth century. Kutchamaquan's renaming suggests once again that kinship ties existed between the two men, bolstering the namesake's claims of legitimacy.<sup>775</sup> Despite Connecticut's intrusion into the issue of Pequot succession, they could not escape or undo Cassacinamon's influential legacy. Robin Cassacinamon became, even after death, the essential sign of legitimacy among the various factions and branches of the Pequots.

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No tawdry scandal or crime of passion closed the book on Robin Cassacinamon's life. If Cassacinamon was in his early seventies in 1692, the sachem may simply have expired due to physical infirmity or illness. Given the available evidence, that seems the more likely cause of death, and that is how the Mashantucket tribe views it today.<sup>776</sup> If that is true, Cassacinamon — like his old foe Uncas — died of old age, in his own lands, and among his own people. This was an impressive feat for a sachem during a turbulent

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<sup>774</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 100-101; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 145-146.

<sup>775</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 44, 73-77, 95-97; *CR*, IV: 122-123, 140-141, 202; McBride, "Legacy," 88-91; Holmes, "In Behalf of Myself & My People," 141-146, 157.

<sup>776</sup>McBride, "Legacy," 88-92; McBride, "July 2008," interview by author.

century of change. For the Mashantucket Pequot tribe, Cassacinamon died after a lifetime of service, having fulfilled to the best of his rare abilities his responsibilities as sachem. His exact burial site remains unknown. Perhaps the Pequots interred him in the Long Pond cemetery, the place noted by Mashantucket Pequots of the “Old Stock” in the eighteenth century as being a place “where our predecessors anciently dwelt and our grandfather and fathers planted.”<sup>777</sup> If he was not interred at Long Pond, he was buried at some other undiscovered gravesite on either Noank or Mashantucket. But, significantly, he was buried on Pequot land.

Robin Cassacinamon outlived many friends, like John Winthrop Jr., who helped him achieve his goals. The Pequot sachem outlasted many adversaries as well, crafty and powerful men like Uncas, Miantonomi, Ninigret, and John Mason. Perhaps that filled him with a certain feeling of satisfaction at the end. As Pequot sachem, he would have been buried with wampum and other goods (both ritual and mundane) that denoted his rank and status as leader. No conclusive evidence suggests that Cassacinamon ever converted to Christianity. Given the relationship with John Winthrop Jr., he may have — at most — incorporated certain aspects of Christianity into his own Algonquian spiritual world view, but that is all.<sup>778</sup> He would have been buried in the traditional Algonquian way: with his head pointed towards the southwest, the dwelling place of Cautantouwwit the benevolent creator. It was Cautantouwwit who, with the crow as his messenger, brought to the Pequots — the People of the Shallow Waters — the gift of maize.

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<sup>777</sup>*Indian Papers*, 1: 100, 108; McBride, ““Ancient and Crazie,””: 67-68.

<sup>778</sup>Evidence of such incorporation was found during excavations of the Long Pond cemetery. One burial contained a medicine bundle full of objects ascribed with sacred power, including a bear’s paw and a Bible verse from a King James version of the Bible. McBride, “Where Our Fathers and Grandfathers Dwelled.”

Cassacinamon's family and kin, guided by a shaman or powwow, would have invoked the proper rituals and manitou ensuring that Cheepi/Hobbomok, the spirit of the dead, allowed Cassacinamon into the afterlife.<sup>779</sup>

The changing regional political situation made the last years of Cassacinamon's life particularly difficult. The shift to an Anglo-Iroquoian frontier initiated a chain reaction that consolidated English power within colonial New England. Connecticut authorities exercised a level of authority and control that they had never previously been able to express. Even the Pequots, who faced significant English influence after the Pequot War, had never encountered such control prior to the 1680s. Among the Pequots, this change manifested in greater English control over their reservation lands, an internal challenge to Cassacinamon's authority as sachem, and English interference in the succession struggle after Cassacinamon's death in 1692.

However, despite these political challenges, the sachem and the Mashantucket Pequots were not powerless. Cassacinamon weathered Mamaho's challenges, and he incorporated Mamaho into his network of allies and kin by using the skills and strategies that he had depended on for decades. And although Connecticut authorities increasingly meddled in Pequot affairs by the end of the seventeenth-century, the personal affiliations Cassacinamon nurtured within the Connecticut government produced advocates who aided the Pequots even after his death. The sachem's influence, plans, and legacy left an

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<sup>779</sup>William S. Simmons, "The Mystic Voice: Pequot Folklore from the Seventeenth Century to the Present," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Nation*, edited by Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 143; McBride, "Ancient and Crazie," 68-72; Oberg, *Uncas*, 203; Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 233-241; Patricia E. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Washington, D.C., 2001), 117-188.

indelible impression upon the Mashantucket Pequots, as evidenced by their invocation of his memory even after his death.

Cassacinamon left behind definitive signs of an accomplished life. His skills as an interpreter and intermediary, his persuasive abilities as sachem, and his strategic alliances all produced tangible results for the Mashantucket Pequots. Although he did not reunite all of the Pequots under his sachemship, his victories ensured that the Mashantucket Pequots survived into the modern era. The land, a home for his people, and the power of his name, all stood as a testament to the strength and life of Robin Cassacinamon. The Pequots survived due to their ties with one another and their land, and their support of a leader who earned the right to serve them. That is what endured.

The sachem had served his people well.

## Conclusion

The Pequots held on to the memory and legacy of Robin Cassacinamon. However, colonials and later Americans who were not members of the tribe largely ignored Cassacinamon's contributions to Pequot history, and they certainly minimized his role in regional Anglo-Algonquian politics. Two nineteenth-century exceptions to this trend are John William De Forest and Francis Caulkins. Both men published histories of Connecticut in 1851 and 1852 respectively.<sup>780</sup> De Forest and Caulkins recognized Cassacinamon as an important Pequot leader after the Pequot War. They knew he secured the Mashantucket reservation for the tribe, and they also criticized the brutal treatment the Pequots received during the Pequot War and the abuses they suffered after it. While important, De Forest and Caulkins only briefly acknowledge Cassacinamon. They did not truly examine the significance of Cassacinamon's efforts, and fell into the trap that later twentieth century scholars experienced.

As time passed, the opinion that Cassacinamon was little more than a "sidekick" of John Winthrop Jr. grew in strength. In other nineteenth and early twentieth histories written about the Pequots, authors described Cassacinamon with the same dismissive tone as John Mason, if they mentioned him at all. In volume one of B.B. Thatcher's *Indian Biography* published in 1837, Cassacinamon is referred to as little more than "Mr. Winthrop's Indian" and dismissed as "a man of no particular note."<sup>781</sup> Another work

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<sup>780</sup>William De Forest, *The History of the Indians of Connecticut, from the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford, CT: 1851), 226-229, 231, 242-246, 260, 283, 422; Francis Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut, from the First Survey of the Coast in 1612 to 1852* (New London, CT: 1852), 186-187.

<sup>781</sup>B.B. Thatcher, *Indian Biography, or, An historical account of those individuals who have been distinguished among the North American natives as orators, warriors, statesmen, and other remarkable characters* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837), 289, 310.

referred to Cassacinamon as Winthrop's "spicy assistant," a juvenile play on the fact that his name sounded like the word "cinnamon."<sup>782</sup> It is not surprising that this ignorance of Pequot history occurred at a time when popular histories and popular culture believed the Pequots to be extinct. Dismissed or ignored by outsiders for decades, the Mashantucket Pequots and their memory of Cassacinamon weathered the storm of neglect and abuse well into the twentieth century.

Robin Cassacinamon returned to the consciousness of the general public in the 1970s, when the Mashantucket Pequots launched their second resurgence. As members of the tribe returned to their reservation lands and began rebuilding their community, tribal chairman Richard Hayward and the tribe adopted Cassacinamon's mark as part of their official tribal seal, seeing obvious parallels between Cassacinamon's efforts and their own. Tribal leaders once again invoked Cassacinamon in their efforts to bring tribal members home, revitalize their communities, and campaign for federal recognition.<sup>783</sup> They achieved these goals beyond their wildest expectations. Tribal members gathered, their numbers grew, and they achieved federal recognition. Economic development began on the reservation, and the tribe eventually embraced casino gambling – and all of the benefits and drawbacks brought by the casino. Most importantly, tribal members embraced efforts toward cultural revitalization. Feast days, festivals, tribal arts and

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<sup>782</sup>General Society of Colonial Wars, *Papers and Addresses of the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut*, volume 1 (1903), 56.

<sup>783</sup>Laurence M. Hauptman and Jack D. Wherry, "Preface" in *The Pequots of Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*, edited by Laurence M. Hauptman and Jack D. Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), xiii-xiv; Jack Campisi, "The Emergence of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, 1637-195," in *The Pequots of Southern New England*, 117-140; Kevin McBride, "The Legacy of Robin Cassacinamon: Mashantucket Pequot Leadership in the Historic Period," in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 91.

crafts, a language reclamation program, and other activities that fostered a sense of Pequot community and identity developed on the reservation, and the memory of Cassacinamon holds a place in that mission.

Robin Cassacinamon's importance in Mashantucket Pequot history cannot be underestimated. In the interconnected world of seventeenth-century Anglo-Algonquian New England, neither Algonquians nor English exerted exclusive regional dominance. This enmeshed society fostered unique conditions during the forty-year period between the Pequot War and King Philip's War that enabled the Pequots to reconstitute their communities after the devastation of the Pequot War. Robin Cassacinamon was the essential figure in this process, and to understand his life is to understand how the Pequots survived as a distinct, recognizable people. His skills as an interpreter, diplomat, intermediary, and community leader connected Cassacinamon to the surviving Pequots and to important regional Algonquian and Puritan figures such as John Winthrop Jr., the Mohegan grand sachem Uncas, and the Narragansett-Niantic sachem Ninigret.

Yet, an examination of his life suggests Cassacinamon's importance transcends the Pequots. Cassacinamon's abilities as a sachem, his deep ties among the Pequots and other Algonquian groups, and his connections with the Winthrop family and other colonial leaders empowered the sachem. Cassacinamon's leadership credentials and political alliances, his linguistic skills, and his diplomatic talents made him an important information broker, cultural intermediary, and political leader. These abilities made him an essential part of the regional political framework encompassing the Algonquian and English polities of southern New England. In this way, Cassacinamon utilized several of the political and social strategies described by Eric Spencer Johnson in order to



implement his agenda. By operating in the gaps and intersections where these polities interacted with one another in the interconnected, “covalent” Anglo-Algonquian society that Neil Salisbury and others have examined, Cassacinamon and the Pequots carved out a place for themselves within the regional social and political power structure. This interconnected society proved finite; after King Philip’s War English control over southern New England solidified, and a new Anglo-Iroquoian frontier formed in the west. Cassacinamon utilized every tool at his disposal — his lineage and role as sachem, political alliances, and skills as a cultural broker, as well as the support of the surviving Pequots — and obtained tangible benefits for the Pequots and for himself. Cassacinamon’s leadership provided the Pequots with the essential tools they needed for long-term survival as a distinct people: a land-base, the ability to form and maintain their own communities, and the power to choose their own leaders. Although provided the window of opportunity remained finite, Cassacinamon’s achievements proved stable enough to survive the political shift that occurred at the end of the seventeenth-century.

Thus, we return once again to the statue of Robin Cassacinamon in the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. In his lifetime, Cassacinamon’s persistence and shrewdness produced tangible success. Over three hundred after his death, the Pequots have reconstituted themselves as a people, they have regained their own land, and they are governed by Pequot leaders. On his passing, Cassacinamon was likely laid to rest among his Pequot ancestors, on Pequot lands where the Pequots had long resided. The tribe owes its continued existence to the tenacity and will of its people and to Robin Cassacinamon’s effective leadership during those critical years after the Pequot War. The sachem served his people well.

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