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INTRODUCTION

A Tale of Two Uprisings

In January 1674, Roger Delke was incarcerated in Surry County, Virginia, for his participation in a December 1673 meeting at the Lawne's Creek Parish church in which he and thirteen other Surry County residents had discussed a plan to encourage their neighbors to resist paying a recently enacted tax levy. The available evidence suggests that the fourteen conspirators were certain that their fellow Virginians would rise up beside them if the government attempted to stop them. Furthermore, they were prepared for a violent uprising should that occur. According to his jailors, Delke stated as much: "It is apparent that the said Delk [*sic*] . . . did this day discourseing of that meeting, Justifye the same and said we will burn all, before one shall Suffer."¹ Yet despite Delke's promises, his neighbors did not flock to the cause. In fact, three days after he uttered the threat, many of his co-conspirators (the record is unclear as to whether he was one of them), upon being lectured by the court as to the justice of the levy, "answered that they were exceeding well satisfied in the case, and were heartily sorry for what they had done."² Nothing burned and the Lawne's Creek plot remained just that, a plot that failed much as had previous attempts to ignite a broad-based social rebellion in Virginia during the 1660s and 1670s.³

Two years later, during the spring and summer of 1676, Virginia famously exploded in the violent uprising known as Bacon's Rebellion. During this period an army made up of Virginians from all levels of society attempted, according to their leader Nathaniel Bacon, to "ruine and extirpate all Indians in Generall." When the leaders of the colony led by the Royal Governor, Sir William Berkeley, branded them

as rebels and attempted to apprehend Bacon before he could achieve his genocidal aims, Bacon and his followers proceeded to loot their estates and terrorize their families. The ensuing four months of warfare between loyalist and rebel Virginians remained a particularly terrifying and potent memory for Virginians into the era of the American Revolution.⁴

Less than thirty months separated the Lawne's Creek plot and Bacon's Rebellion, yet while one produced widespread social rebellion, the other fizzled because of a lack of support from the populace and a lack of commitment among the leadership. Understanding the reasons why Bacon's Rebellion succeeded in garnering broader support and commitment while the Lawne's Creek plot failed is the central question of this study. Specifically, in this book I argue that while the Lawne's Creek plot stemmed from many of the same social conflicts that later fed Bacon's Rebellion, it lacked the ability to break the powerful bonds of dependence that bound the various groups of disgruntled Virginians to the wealthy and powerful planters who controlled the colony's government. A call for the extermination of all Indians constitutes the critical element missing from the Lawne's Creek rising, but that call was so powerfully present in Bacon's Rebellion, so compelling in fact, that it helped unite enough of the disparate strands of disaffection in the colony to forge a widespread social rebellion. The differences in the two incidents demonstrate that the imbalance in political power and the burdens of regressive taxation were not enough in and of themselves to spark an uprising in Virginia. Something or someone needed to unite dissatisfied Virginians across class, geographic, political, and social boundaries. I contend that that something was a desire to violently displace Indians, and the man who exploited that hatred most effectively was Nathaniel Bacon.

In addition, whereas it may be tempting to view Bacon's Rebellion as a sudden and violent eruption that, in the words of Edmund Morgan, "produced no real program of reform" and espoused no defined principles, when we examine the rebellion as the logical outgrowth of the social relations established in the early decades of the colony, we can begin to see both the principles and the reform program dismissed by previous scholars.⁵ In short, we must view Bacon's Rebellion not as a precursor to eighteenth-century colonial America but instead as an incident created by and representative of an earlier social matrix and the interaction of that social matrix with Native societies. Homicidal tendencies toward Virginia Indians represent much more than an unimportant symptom of Bacon's Rebellion. They embody both the rebellion's primary cause and its ultimate goal or program. Therefore, the relationships and ideas that produced the rebellion deserve study in their own right, as much as those resulting from it.⁶

The class relationships of seventeenth-century Virginia exemplify the scenario best expressed by E. P. Thompson in his famous "field of force" analogy that

compared the various orders of English society to a science experiment in which “an electrical current magnetized a plate covered with iron fillings.” When magnetized, most of the fillings attached themselves to whichever pole they happened to be closest to, but the fillings in the middle of the plate wound up caught between the magnetic fields of both poles. Thompson argued that one pole represented the elite classes of gentry and aristocracy while the other symbolized the plebeian classes. The paralyzed shavings in the middle represented the middling orders of tradesmen, artisans, and lesser gentry who were, in Thompson’s words, “bound down by lines of dependency to the rulers.”⁷

The analogy best applies to seventeenth-century Virginia during the thirty years preceding Bacon’s Rebellion. During that time period, which according to historian Edmund Morgan was “a golden fleecing,” the attempts at aggrandizement by Virginia’s social and economic elite grew evermore brazen. In the words of historian Anthony Parent, during this period “an elite evolved, consolidated its power, and fixed itself as an extensive land- and slaveholding class.” Parent places this development in the era immediately following the end of the Anglo-Powhatan Wars, largely because of his conclusion that the switch to African slavery occurred in the 1670s and 1680s. However, John Coombs places the transition much earlier. Specifically, he locates the conversion to race-based slavery in Virginia as early as the 1650s, with slaves outnumbering indentured servants by the 1680s. If Coombs is correct, the colony’s elites would have to have acquired the massive landholdings required for a slave society by that period. Therefore, the period between the beginning of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War in 1622 and the arrival of Sir William Berkeley as governor in 1641 represents the critical period for examining the rise of this planter elite.⁸

By the 1670s, elite Virginians’ self-serving manipulation of the colony’s legal, political, and judicial structures had combined with other issues beyond their control to create a situation in which middling planters, westerners, and others outside the small circle of power that surrounded Virginia governor William Berkeley broke away from the force exerted on them by Virginia’s elite. When this occurred, the balance of the field of force tilted in favor of non-elites, and they exploited the opportunities this presented to unleash violence against all Indians in Virginia as a way of gaining the land they felt was both their birthright and their best hope for checking the growing power of their elite counterparts. Specifically, the issue of *carte blanche* permission for all-out war on all Indians in Virginia divided the colony’s planter classes to the point that many of them joined with landless freedmen, former indentured servants, middling and small landholders, and others outside the small inner circle of men who controlled Virginia’s government to plunge the Old Dominion into months of violent chaos.⁹

This book asserts that Bacon's Rebellion resulted from myriad internal and external factors, building in Virginia since its earliest days, that drove Virginians to increasingly interpret their disputes with one another along class lines. Disputes over access to political power, taxation, land, and defense policies that seemed to favor the well-connected at the expense of those outside the inner circle of power; failed attempts to diversify the colony's economy; restrictions on access to the lucrative Indian trade; the reverberations of wars between Indian groups outside Virginia; English conflicts with the Dutch during the 1660s; the effects of the transition from indentured servitude to slavery; the ups and downs of the tobacco economy; and tensions resulting from increased Crown intervention in the governance of the colony all played a significant role in driving Virginia to the 1676 upheaval. In the end, though, only a call for the annihilation of all Indians in Virginia could unite the different factions arising from these issues and mold them into a widespread social rebellion.

The concept of class is fraught with multiple interpretations and connotations. In using the term in a pre-industrial context such as seventeenth-century Virginia, I have employed the definition used by Gary Nash in *The Urban Crucible*. According to Nash, Americans, "living amid historical forces that were transforming the social landscape, came to perceive antagonistic divisions based on economic and social position; they began to struggle in relation to these conflicting interests; and through these struggles developed a consciousness of class."¹⁰ In other words, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson, classes come into existence through conflict over differing interests. Those interests may be defined by the classic relationship to the ownership of the means of production, or they may not.¹¹

In this case, access to land, servants, and political power came to define the class interests of seventeenth-century Virginians. Class antagonism stemming from these interests roiled throughout the first seventy-five years of Virginia's existence. For much of that same period, unremitting violence against Virginia's Indian peoples also constituted the norm. Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 represents a unique historical moment in which both class conflict and violence against Indians became enmeshed, with terrifying and long-lasting consequences. Therefore, the role of class-based disputes over who could and who could not authorize violence against Virginia's Indian peoples represents a critical element of Bacon's Rebellion heretofore understudied by scholars of seventeenth-century Virginia in general and of Bacon's Rebellion in particular. Whereas other studies of Bacon's Rebellion assign Virginia's Native people to a relatively minor role as unwitting instigators of its outbreak, this study argues that Indians were crucial to the rebellion's beginning, progress, and, ultimately, its resolution.¹² That resolution not only hastened the spread of African slavery and the development of patriarchal gender relations in Virginia but also forever altered the relationships among Native Americans, Virginia colonists,

and the Virginia government in ways fundamental to our understanding of the later history of Virginia and the relationship between Native Americans and whites, as well as class and race in the future United States.

Specifically, the violent confrontations between colonists and the Powhatan chiefdom during the first thirty-five years of the colony, while necessary for the consolidation of elite power, also inculcated in the minds of many Virginians a belief that unrestrained violence against Indians by any member of white Virginia society for land acquisition purposes represented the normative state of Virginia-Indian relations.¹³ When the end of the Cromwellian Protectorate in 1660 returned Sir William Berkeley to the governorship of Virginia, he used the opportunity to embark upon what one historian has termed “the boldest state-building program the colony had yet seen.”¹⁴ The key components of this program were a lucrative trading relationship based on peaceful coexistence with Indians, both in Virginia and beyond its borders; securing the loyalty of property-owning Virginians; checking the potential for disorder among the colony’s landless, servant, and enslaved populations; and diversifying Virginia’s economy. For various reasons, many of which were beyond his control, Berkeley’s state-building program ultimately failed. The repercussions of that failure, including the imposition of higher taxes, the abridgement of political rights, and attempts to protect the Indian trade by upholding the rights of Indians at the same level as those of whites, led to Bacon’s Rebellion. While Virginians held grievances against the Virginia government before this time, it took Berkeley’s reluctance to allow the indiscriminate killing of Indians by frontier whites to finally bring about the rebellion.

This study differs from many previous works in ways intended to augment rather than replace their conception of seventeenth-century Virginia society. Specifically, my aim is not to explain the role of Bacon’s Rebellion in hastening the onset of African slavery, hardening the patriarchal gender system in Virginia, or demonstrating the rebellion’s connection to either King Philip’s War (which was raging in New England at the same time) or the American Revolution 100 years later. Instead, I seek to examine the social struggle that created the rebellion and to place a dispute among Virginians over the permissibility of eradicating Indians for land at the forefront of our understanding of this pivotal event.¹⁵

In addition, other works that examine the social and political structures of seventeenth-century Virginia often fail to treat Virginia Indians with the same complexity they apply to whites.¹⁶ Many works that focus on Virginia Indians do the exact opposite.¹⁷ One of the overriding goals of this study has been to present whites and Indians in Virginia as equally sophisticated participants in the making of their shared history.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, much of the scholarship that focuses solely on Bacon’s Rebellion has long been preoccupied with whether the rebellion represented the

first stirrings of the liberal democratic ideals often associated with the American Revolution. Therefore, those interpretations have generally sought to explain the events of 1676 in light of the events of 1776. They therefore provide little in the way of explaining how seventeenth-century Anglo and Indian Virginians understood the world in which they lived.¹⁸ My work seeks to understand this period in terms the participants themselves would have understood, not in light of a revolution 100 years later that none of them could have foreseen. To do so, we must begin at the beginning, so to speak, by examining the various attitudes and assumptions Virginians and Indians brought with them to their encounter and the ways those assumptions started them on the path toward the momentous events of 1676.¹⁹

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Virginia, or Tsenacommacah as its Algonquian inhabitants referred to it, stood on the cusp of what historian Elliot West has referred to as one of those times when “events line up to produce explosions of imagination.” For West, the contact between previously separate peoples constitutes one of the most dynamic instances in which we can glimpse the “human envisioning of new lifeways and routes to power, the effects of that search on physical and social environments and the dilemmas and disasters that so often follow.”²⁰ While West was referring to the meeting of Native Americans and whites on the Great Plains, the contact era in Virginia also fits this model. First, the Algonquians of Virginia fashioned a powerful chiefdom out of smaller, tangentially connected settlements. They did so not simply to accumulate temporal political gains or in response to environmental stimuli, though both of these were factors, but, most important, for the accretion of, and in accordance with, their understanding of powerful spiritual forces that guided their actions through ritual, ceremony, and vision. Almost as soon as this spiritually ordained “empire” came into existence, the Europeans arrived in the midst of the “new world” the Powhatans of Virginia had created for themselves.

Having only recently broken the bonds of ignorance and superstition that had circumscribed their movements for a millennium, Europeans likewise began to re-imagine the world and their place in it. Spurred on by the developments of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, Europeans quickly re-engineered old religious, societal, economic, and governmental structures such that, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the idea that humans could understand and control all things in the world had become commonplace. Furthermore, the notion that groups of people, organized into governments and nations, were in competition with one another for the world’s wealth spurred Europeans to spread out across the globe in an effort to dominate the lands, peoples, and resources of distant shores.

This process brought the Algonquians of Virginia face to face with English invaders in 1607. The meeting of Algonquian and English cultures in seventeenth-century Virginia opened in the minds of many on both sides new paths to power and new

opportunities to strengthen their respective societies. To again cite Elliot West, “Above all the merging of worlds was a revelation of routes to power in its largest sense.”²¹ So rather than a conservative clash in which each side sought to impose its traditional ways of doing things on the other, both Virginia Algonquians and English colonists developed particular visions for the future of Virginia that involved the merging of their cultures to a certain extent. Eventually, English colonists envisioned two different and competing scenarios that they attempted to impose on the region’s Native inhabitants. Many of Virginia’s leaders envisioned a well-ordered colony based on a hierarchical social structure. Whether such a schema was designed to enrich them personally or represented the best means for securing the good of the entire population is less important than the undeniable fact that they prized an ordered society in Virginia above all things. Regardless of what motivated their desire for said order, challenges to it would be met with swift and severe resistance.

In addition, many outside the colony’s leading families came to perceive this desire for order on the part of the elite as motivated solely by a desire to enrich the few at the expense of the many, and they thus began to struggle against their leaders. Many Virginians—particularly those who possessed less wealth and political power than those who controlled the colony’s government but also wealthy men who by the 1670s, as a result of geography, political ideology, or temperament, found themselves outside Sir William Berkeley’s increasingly small inner circle—sought opportunity above all else. Having left a homeland in which the combination of a small amount of land and a growing population had virtually destroyed any hope they may have had of improving their economic life and, by extension, gaining for themselves some small measure of political power, many poor Englishmen were easily lured to Virginia by promotional literature that portrayed the colony as a veritable land of milk and honey. Being worked to death for the purpose of enriching someone else was decidedly not what they had in mind.

Increasingly, as the seventeenth century wore on, Indian land in the West came to represent their last opportunity for improvement. Likewise, smaller property holders looking to maintain or increase their social position and wealthier individuals denied access to the inner sanctum of power in the colony also looked to the Indian lands in the western portions of the colony as both a sort of birthright and a gateway to the lucrative Indian trade beyond. As mentioned, seventeenth-century Virginia society was not one of static classes defined by an unchanging relationship to a sort of pre-industrial “means of production”; instead, class in Virginia was a lived and changeable relationship defined by many things, some economic in nature but many not. At times, class consciousness in Virginia was defined by tobacco wealth, land ownership, political power, occupation, and various other means by which seventeenth-century Virginians differentiated themselves. By 1676,

the essential division within Virginia society had become the fundamental importance of Indian land to one's future and the access to the political power needed to make the acquisition of that land possible.²²

Finally, though he had created an extremely powerful chiefdom, the Algonquian leader Powhatan was not content to sit back and rest. Powerful non-Algonquian groups to his north and west, as well as the rebellious tendencies of some members of his own chiefdom, created a powerful need to seek new alliances in the physical world and new avenues of power in the spiritual world. As such, the Algonquian peoples of Virginia possessed their own vision of Virginia's future, and all newcomers to the area would be dealt with according to their perceived ability to help or hinder the realization of that vision.

During the first thirty-five to forty years of the colony's existence, these competing visions of Virginians and Virginia Algonquians spawned three separate conflicts known collectively as the Anglo-Powhatan Wars. It was during those wars that many Virginians first came to believe that violence against Indians for the purpose of obtaining land needed no sanction beyond that of the individual engaged in it. In seeking to win those wars, Virginia's leaders unwittingly encouraged this idea to develop. By the end of the Anglo-Powhatan Wars in 1646, the roots of the conflict that would become Bacon's Rebellion were well entrenched; despite the defeat and dissolution of the Powhatan chiefdom, Indian hatred constituted the critical element around which all other disaffection in Virginia coalesced.

Beyond this introduction, this book is divided into six chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter describes the early relationship of the Virginians and the Powhatans at Jamestown. In these early years, best remembered for the incidents involving John Smith and Pocahontas, one can see the early stirrings of the conflicts that would bedevil the Anglo-Powhatan relationship for the next thirty years.

Chapter 2 locates the early origins of the belief in unrestrained violence against Native people that eventually spawned Bacon's Rebellion in the First Anglo-Powhatan War. It was during this conflict that Virginia's leadership first encouraged violent retribution against Native people by all levels of society as a means of establishing full control over the colony. Sixty years later, Nathaniel Bacon and his followers would employ much of the language and rationale used during this period in their own campaign against Virginia's Indian people.

The third chapter covers the years 1614 to 1646, with particular emphasis on the role of the Second Anglo-Powhatan War and the tobacco boom in the creation of a group I refer to as the "planter elite." Virginia colonists, like their brethren back in England and in other colonies, understood that society was organized along the lines of hierarchy and inequality. However, if it had ever been their purpose, the early leaders of the colony proved unable to completely replicate the social structure

of England on the banks of the James River. Specifically, the opportunity for land ownership was certainly more widespread. However, as we will see, this did not necessarily mean land ownership *was* widespread. In addition, owning land did not necessarily convey the same degree or level of social and political status it did in England. Instead, one's ability to own the labor of other human beings, be they indentured servants or slaves, became the basis for the major social distinctions in seventeenth-century Virginia. Because these social distinctions were based on one's ability to control the distribution of servants and slaves and, to a lesser extent, land and not on hereditary distinctions, the social hierarchy in Virginia remained quite volatile throughout the seventeenth-century, with many individuals moving in and out of the various rungs of the social ladder. However, through their membership on the Council of State and service in the House of Burgesses as well as the local county bench, a relatively small group of people came to dominate Virginia society and politics during the period between the end of the First Anglo-Powhatan War in 1614 and the end of the Third Anglo-Powhatan War in 1646.²³

These people were the "winners" in the scramble set off by the tobacco boom and the head-right system. Specifically, they wanted to create social stability, which meant they desired to end the wars against the Powhatans as soon as possible, as long as the Powhatans would either relocate or accept the role prescribed for Indians in their vision of the colony's future. They also wanted to limit competition from new arrivals and non-elites, such as middling and small planters, artisans, and landless freeman. Finally, elites wanted order above all things. Whether that desire stemmed from Renaissance Humanist sources, from the Metropole's (Crown, company, far-away decision makers) need for profit, or from racialist notions first espoused to justify the subjugation of Ireland in the end matters little. Order, to allow for the maximization of personal profit or of what they termed the greater good, constituted the overriding goal of Virginia elites.²⁴ Eventually, this group became divided against itself as a result of factors relating to geography, length of time in the colony, political opinion, and general temperament. The call for an extermination campaign against all Indians in 1676 represents the issue that brought all of these divisions to the fore and spawned Bacon's Rebellion.

Chapter 4 describes the disappointing experience of many immigrants to Virginia during the first half of the seventeenth century. While many of these immigrants eventually became landholders and a few even obtained planter elite status, the majority came from groups beneath the great planters. According to historians Warren Billings, John Selby, and Thad Tate, these groups included servants, slaves, and freemen. The latter were further subdivided into the categories of the landless underclass, small planters, and middling Virginians. The Virginia underclass consisted of former servants, slaves, failed planters, and others of the dispossessed. Their

most distinguishable characteristics were their landlessness and their lack of a tie to any particular locale. Small planters stood one level removed from the underclass and had been only marginally successful at attaining enough land to make a go of tobacco planting. In addition, they rarely, if ever, held even the most insignificant political office. Middling planters included tobacco planters as well as most artisans. These individuals owned enough property and, therefore, sufficient tobacco profits to allow them to own a small number of servants or, more rarely, slaves. In addition, Billings, Selby, and Tate found that many of them brought powerful connections to the English mercantile sector that allowed them to diversify their economic activities and avoid sole dependence on the tobacco trade. Members of this group were often successful at obtaining political office, particularly at the county level, and many of the most adroit of their number managed to attach themselves to elites in a burgeoning client-patron system so that they often managed to leave their children in a higher social position than the one they had originally occupied.²⁵

My collective labeling of this group is not meant to indicate unanimity of thought, opinion, or action among them. In fact, many of these groups found themselves at odds with each other as often as not. Middling and small planters nearly always aspired to join the ranks of those who were above them in the social hierarchy and therefore were often less inclined to support the grievances of those within or below their station so they would not damage their standing with their more elite patrons. However, in 1676 circumstances aligned to drive them into an alliance with one another against the leadership of the colony. Despite their differences, these groups did share one basic commonality: they came to Virginia expecting opportunity. They were promised it in the promotional literature in general and by those who either paid their way or recruited them to undertake the journey. Therefore, their vision of Virginia's future was one in which they expected to enjoy more economic success and political power than they had in England. Instead, many small planters and members of the underclass found themselves exploited by elite planters looking to capitalize on the tobacco boom. Likewise, many middling planters and artisans found their road to political and social advancement increasingly blocked by the growing concentration of power in the hands of the planter elite as the seventeenth century wore on.

Chapter 5 examines the period from the outbreak of the Third Anglo-Powhatan War in 1644 to the eve of Bacon's Rebellion more than thirty-five years later. During this period, particularly after the Stuart Restoration, many of Virginia's leaders, Sir William Berkeley chief among them, came to believe they had succeeded in establishing the colony and their government on a firm footing of authority sufficient to unleash a period of peace and prosperity unrivaled in the English Atlantic world. In many ways, Berkeley was correct. The thirty years between his capture of Opechancanough and the outbreak of Bacon's Rebellion brought unprecedented peace, wealth, and

stability to many in Virginia. However, this reality led Berkeley and his closest associates to attempt a series of sweeping reforms of Virginia's economy and society that ultimately failed, thus endangering this period of stability. In addition, a much more hands-on approach by restored Stuart officials in England intent on using the colonies to forge a lasting mercantile empire, the repercussions of Iroquois aggression to the north, warfare with the Dutch, as well as a growing perception among many frontier residents that Berkeley's government had increasingly come to favor the fortunes of a small inner circle of longtime friends and councilors to the detriment of the rest of the population initiated much of the unrest that culminated in Bacon's Rebellion.

In this chapter, I return to the events of the Lawne's Creek Uprising. The standard interpretation is that the uprising never got off the ground because of the low social standing of those who led it and that it would take people much higher up in the social hierarchy to build a movement broad enough to truly threaten Virginia's ruling elites. I complicate this by arguing that the missing element is Indians. While I do not believe scholars such as Edmund Morgan are wrong to say that the missing element is the leadership of someone like Bacon, the key issue for Bacon was the permissibility of the violent acquisition of Indian land. Therefore, it took both leadership from the middling planter–frontier elite strata of society and the issue of violence against Indians to unite the heretofore separate streams of unrest into a cohesive rebellion.

The next chapter examines the rebellion itself. I place particular emphasis not only on the role of violence toward Indians in the outbreak and progress of the conflict but also on the way the rebellion transitioned from a war against Indians to an excuse to terrorize and loot the estates of Berkeley's elite supporters. When this occurred, those elites whose support was so critical to Bacon's Rebellion largely deserted him, thus dooming his uprising to failure.

The final chapter is an epilogue that outlines the ways Virginia was irrevocably changed by the experience of Bacon's Rebellion. It does so in two primary ways. First, it examines the post-rebellion era in which the right of all Virginians, regardless of social standing, to violently wrest land from Native Americans was affirmed and, among other things, helped to forge a heretofore missing unity between the House of Burgesses and the general population in the colony that became increasingly important to understand the conflicts between the royal governors and the Council of State on one hand and the burgesses on the other that characterized their eighteenth-century relationship. I conclude with a discussion of the way that, despite the increasing desperation of their situation, Virginia Indians managed to ensure their continued existence in Virginia by manipulating English legal structures in the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation.

Bacon's own actions sufficiently support the arguments outlined here. In his drive to clear the backcountry of those he referred to as "Robbers and Theeves and

Invaders of his Majesties Right and our Interest and Estates,” Bacon gave no quarter. He reportedly tortured and killed prisoners as well as combatants. According to one account, Bacon indiscriminately “fell upon the Indians and killed some of them who were our best Friends.”²⁶

Perhaps the best evidence of the primacy of Indian hatred for Bacon and his followers comes not from Bacon but from one of his lieutenants. With his last words Thomas Hansford, the first of Bacon’s followers to be executed as part of Governor Berkeley’s campaign to reassert his control over Virginia, cited only one reason he took up arms against the government: “Dureing the short time he had to live, after his sentance, he approved to his best advantage for the well fare of his soule, by repentance and contrition for all his Sinns, in generall, excepting his Rebellion, which he would not acknowledg; desireing the People, at the place of execution, to take notis that he dyed a Loyall Subject, and a lover of his Countrey; and that he had never taken up arms, but for the destruction of the Indians, who had murdered so many Christians.”²⁷

We now turn to an examination of the cultures that met in Virginia during the seventeenth century to determine what assumptions about the world and their place in it they brought to that meeting. It is hoped that this examination will lead us much closer to understanding Nathaniel Bacon, Thomas Hansford, their followers, their opponents, and their Algonquian victims.

NOTES

1. Warren Billings, “The Warrants for the Arrest of the Dissidents January 3, 1674,” in *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth-Century: A Documentary History of Virginia, 1606–1689*, ed. Warren Billings (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 263–64.

2. Warren Billings, “The Surry County Court’s Verdict, January 6, 1674,” in *Old Dominion in the Seventeenth-Century*, 265.

3. Other instances of unrest occurred in York County in 1661 and in 1663 in Gloucester County. See York County Court, “Proceedings in York County Court,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (July 1902): 34–27; Virginia State Historical Society, “Virginia Colonial Records (Continued),” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 15, no. 1 (July 1907): 38–43.

4. Nathaniel Bacon, “Manifesto Concerning the Present Troubles in Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 1 (1894): 55–58; Wilcomb Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon’s Rebellion in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 43; “Commissioners’ Narrative,” in *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675–1690*, ed. Charles McLean Andrews (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 112; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 384–85.

5. Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (June 1972): 22.

6. The National Archives (TNA), Public Record Office (PRO) CO₅/1371 Colonial Office: Proceedings and Reports of the Commissioners for Enquiring into Virginian Affairs and Settling Virginian Grievances, British National Archives, Kew, England; Edward D. Neill, *Virginia Carolorum: The Colony under the Rule of Charles the First and Second, A.D. 1625–A.D. 1685* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1886), 355; Lieutenant Governor Herbert Jeffreys, "Declaration. Swans Point. April 27, 1677," Bacon's Rebellion, Miscellaneous Papers, 1676–1677, Rockefeller Library, Williamsburg, VA. The emergence of nationalism in the aftermath of the American Revolution led to one of the most significant alterations in the way Americans conceptualized the events of 1676. In 1804 the Richmond, Virginia, *Enquirer* printed a previously forgotten firsthand account of Bacon's Rebellion. Along with the document, only recently obtained by Thomas Jefferson, the *Enquirer* printed an anonymous prefatory statement that recast Bacon and his contemporaries as the forerunners of Jefferson and his fellow revolutionaries. From that moment until the publication of Edmund Morgan's article "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox" in 1972 and his subsequent book-length study of colonial Virginia, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, published in 1975, all interpretations of Bacon's Rebellion operated within this paradigm. See *Tracts and Other Papers Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, from the Discovery of the Country to the Year 1776*, ed. Peter Force (Washington, DC: Peter Force, 1835), 3–4; Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom," 5–29; Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*; Mary Newton Stannard, *The Story of Bacon's Rebellion* (Washington, DC: Neale, 1907); Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Torchbearer of the Revolution: The Story of Bacon's Rebellion and Its Leader* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940); Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel*.

7. E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1993), 73.

8. Anthony Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660–1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3; John C. Coombs, "Building 'the Machine': The Development of Slavery and Slave Society in Early Colonial Virginia" (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, 2004); John C. Coombs, "Beyond the 'Origins Debate': Rethinking the Rise of Virginia Slavery," in *Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion*, ed. Douglas Bradburn and John C. Coombs (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 239–78.

9. The idea that Indian hatred was vital to the development of ideas of whiteness, American identity, and even irregular warfare is not in itself a new rise of Early American historiography. However, the trend has been applied less often to the American South. See Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the*

Origins of American Identity (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Alfred Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War-Making on the Frontier, 1607–1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

10. Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), xii.

11. E. P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3 (1978): 149. In addition to my reliance on the Marxian theoretical stance of scholars such as Thompson and Nash, I have also drawn much inspiration from other practitioners in this historiographical tradition such as Peter Linebaugh, Marcus Rediker, Alfred Young, and Woody Holton. See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon, 2000); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2008); Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Verso, 2006); Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon, 2000); Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

12. For example, Wilcomb Washburn's *The Governor and the Rebel*, while certainly not the first but one of the most lasting treatments of the events in question, characterizes both Indian hatred and resistance to taxation in Virginia as symptoms of a larger dispute over the location of authority in the colony. "The locus of significant power in Virginia was not in the governor, but in the individual Englishman, made a superman by his possession of firearms. Neither the Indian in front of him nor the government behind him had the power to curb his desires except in a limited fashion . . . The resulting confusion is what we know as 'Bacon's Rebellion'" (Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel*, 21). While Indians play a larger part in the beginning stages of Edmund Morgan's assessment of Bacon's Rebellion than they do in many other studies before or since, in the end he concludes that Bacon's Rebellion offered an opportunity for "discontent with upper-class leadership" to be "vented in racial hatred" (Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 257). Kathleen Brown also views the role of Indians as merely a manifestation of a long-standing conflict between white Virginians. She states: "Questions about who constituted legitimate political authority in the colony and about what it meant to be a male citizen came to a head during the 1670s as ordinary men faced mounting impediments to their performance of male social roles." Furthermore, "Skirmishes with Indians undermined the security of those who did have families and property, eroding the local and domestic foundations of patriarchal power . . . Chafing under these burdens, ordinary men became unwilling to defer to the gentlemen who were supposed to be their leaders and demanded redress

through armed resistance” (Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996], 139). For Stephen Saunders Webb, while the repercussions of Indian warfare to the north of Virginia sparked the violence, the ultimate program of Bacon and his followers was nothing less than the establishment of a republican government along the lines of that established in America 100 years later (Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984], 3–9). Much of Michael Leroy Oberg’s overall argument is similar to my own, but key differences do exist. Oberg’s bipolar classification system for English colonists that consists of the binary of “metropolitans” and frontier residents is often vague and tends to ignore the role of class as well as other forms of social difference in favor of a kind of geographic means of social categorization that obscures as much as it reveals. In addition, my study places more emphasis on the active role of Indians in this process, which I achieve through a heavier reliance on ethnohistorical methods. Finally, Oberg’s work is a comparison of seventeenth-century relationships between English colonists in Virginia and New England and as such, in an effort to provide a common thread between them, often overlooks critical differences between the two regions. This study, by contrast, focuses solely on the Virginia experience (Oberg, *Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism and Native America, 1585–1685* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999]). Both Warren Billings and his colleagues and Alexander Haskell place Bacon’s Rebellion within the context of a failure of Virginia elites to assure small and middling planters that the Virginia government truly had their best interests at heart; therefore, the government’s unresponsiveness to the Indian raids that sparked the rebellion again represents only a symptom of a larger issue (Warren Billings, Thad Tate, and John Selby, *Colonial Virginia: A History* [White Plains, NY: KTO, 1986]; Warren Billings, *Sir William Berkeley and the Forging of Colonial Virginia* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004]; Alexander B. Haskell, “‘The Affections of the People’: Ideology and the Politics of State Building in Colonial Virginia, 1607–1754” [PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 2004]). The year 2010 brought three more treatments of Bacon’s Rebellion that all subsume the role of Indian hatred within the context of other forces affecting white Virginia society. Lorena Walsh, while not discounting many of the motivations listed earlier, argued that “the economic hardships wrought by new imperial policies and by commercial disruptions caused by international warfare in the mid-1660s and again in the mid-1670s surely contributed to widespread popular discontent” (Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607–1763* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010], 126–27). At roughly the same time, legal historian Christopher Tomlins at least partially returned the scholarship on Bacon’s Rebellion back to Edmund Morgan’s familiar conclusion by locating its roots in “the social instabilities inherent in importing thousands of young single males for years of hard labor while simultaneously frustrating the survivors’

ambitions to acquire land by engrossing what was available, forcing the land-hungry to the most dangerous margins of settlement” (Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 269). Finally, Lauren Benton argues very similar to Oberg that Bacon’s Rebellion is best understood within the context of “geographical distinctions between coastal regions and upriver country” (Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 96).

13. For a discussion of the importance of Powhatan land to the emergence of the Virginia planter elite, see Parent, *Foul Means*, 9–53.

14. Haskell, “Affections of the People,” 179.

15. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*; Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs*. See also Bernard Bailyn, “Politics and Social Structure in Virginia,” in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial America*, ed. James Morton Smith (New York: Norton, 1959), 90–115. Bailyn sees three shifts in Virginia elite leadership over the course of the seventeenth century and argues that ultimately the third group of leaders (those who arrived in the 1660s) exerted the most influence on both the future of the colony and the outbreak of Bacon’s Rebellion. I differ slightly with Bailyn in that I argue for more continuity among the elite leadership throughout the century, if not in membership, then in sentiment and practice.

16. Works that treat white Virginians as a complex and differentiated group while failing to do so for Virginia Indians include April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*. To be fair, Hatfield’s stated purpose is to demonstrate the extent to which Virginia existed as part of a larger Atlantic trading and political network, so therefore an in-depth examination of Anglo-Indian relationships is not central to her study.

17. Works that provide an in-depth portrait of Virginia Indians but present whites as one monolithic entity include Helen Rountree, *Pocahontas, Powhatan, Opechancanough: Three Indian Lives Changed by Jamestown* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005); Frederic W. Gleach, *Powhatan’s World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Margaret Holmes Williamson, *Powhatan Lords of Life and Death: Command and Consent in Seventeenth Century Virginia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

18. These works include Wertenbaker, *Torchbearer of the Revolution*; Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel*; Webb, *1676: The End of American Independence*.

19. Alfred Cave’s *Lethal Encounters: Englishmen and Indians in Colonial Virginia* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011) is currently the most recent treatment of the Anglo-Indian encounter in seventeenth-century Virginia. However, Cave’s work is solely focused on proving whether the actions of Englishmen in Virginia constituted genocide or ethnic cleansing. While I do not dispute Cave’s basic argument that Virginians were certainly guilty of the

latter and oftentimes of the former, my purpose is to analyze the topic in terms that would have been understandable to seventeenth-century Virginians themselves.

20. Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), xxii–xxiii.

21. *Ibid.*, xxii.

22. I rest this particular formulation of class and class consciousness in Virginia on the theoretical model of E. P. Thompson, as expressed in numerous of his major works but best stated in his seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 9–10.

23. See Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, 55. Christopher Tomlins disputes this on the basis that his calculations show fewer indentured servants in the colony than previous scholars claimed; however, the fact that the overall number of servants was lower need not negate the fact that owning the labor of others still represented the marker of social success in the colony. In addition, Anthony Parent recently argued rather effectively that Virginians transitioned to slavery much earlier than previously assumed. Even by the 1630s and 1640s, he found a preference for African slaves over indentured servants among Virginia planters. If this is the case, then the basic argument outlined by Billings, Selby, and Tate remains. See Tomlins, *Freedom Bound*; Parent, *Foul Means*.

24. Alexander Haskell has argued that Virginia elites were concerned “that the only way that they would ever succeed in creating the order and obedience that they considered necessary for transforming Virginia into a civilized ‘commonwealth’ was by winning and maintaining the ‘affections of the people.’” While this might have been the case for many, it seems just as plausible that a deep concern for establishing authority could have derived from a desire to both win the people’s allegiance and maximize one’s own profit (Haskell, “Affections of the People,” 8). For more on the general idea of what exactly the English hoped to establish in Virginia, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonization, 1500–1625* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ethan A. Schmidt, “The Well-Ordered Commonwealth: Humanism, Utopian Perfectionism, and the English Colonization of the Americas,” *Atlantic Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 2010): 309–28; Oberg, *Dominion and Civility*; Nicholas Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (October 1973): 575–98.

25. Billings, Selby, and Tate, *Colonial Virginia*, 58–59.

26. Bacon, “Manifesto Concerning the Present Troubles in Virginia,” 55–58; Washburn, *The Governor and the Rebel*, 43; “Commissioners’ Narrative,” in *Narratives of the Insurrections*, 112.

27. “The History of Bacon’s and Ingram’s Rebellion, 1676,” in *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675–1690*, 80.



MAP 1.1. Virginia Algonquians, 1607. Map by Ryan Morris.