“Ranging Foresters” and “Women-Like Men”: Physical Accomplishment, Spiritual Power, and Indian Masculinity in Early-Seventeenth-Century New England

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Abstract. Through an examination of seventeenth-century English sources and later Indian folklore, this article illustrates the centrality of religion to defining masculinity among Algonquian-speaking Indians in southern New England. Manly ideals were represented in the physical and spiritual excellence of individual living men like the Penacook sachem-powwow Passaconaway and supernatural entities like Maushop. For men throughout the region, cultivating and maintaining spiritual associations was essential to success in the arenas of life defining Indian masculinity: games, hunting, warfare, governance, and marriage. As is stressed throughout the essay, masculinity was also juxtaposed with femininity in a number of important ways in Indian society.

In seventeenth-century New England, colonial observers often derided Indian men, contending that “these ranging foresters,” as William Wood once termed them, failed to work and act as men should and offered a potentially dangerous example to the disorderly elements of Anglo-American society. In a typical seventeenth-century English assessment of Indian gender roles, Wood claimed that Indian wives were “more loving, pitiful, and modest, mild, provident, and laborious than their lazy husbands.” Examining these conceits, scholars have often stressed that such views tell us more about English gender ideals than they reveal about the structure of Indian society. Correctly casting the English hostility toward male Indian gender roles as ethnocentric bias, such work takes special pains to stress the comparative egalitarianism of Native American gender relations. Despite these scholarly insights, there remains a paucity of work that considers how masculinity was defined within the activities and events framing male life. Such an approach illuminates how Indian masculinity was defined through rela-
tions with women, while also illustrating the socialization of men into gender roles.

Moreover, examining masculinity in the early seventeenth century is particularly important because English perceptions of Indian gender practices and relations shaped Anglo-American attitudes and actions. Manliness was thus one measure of the success of missionary efforts and colonization. This logic was well represented in Samuel Treat’s 1693 view that Christian Indian “Deportment and Garb, [was] more Manly and Laudable than any other Indians... in the Province.” To similar ends, Cotton Mather looked back to the middle of the century and remarked that John Eliot’s missionary efforts among the region’s Indians involved “a double work... he was to make men of them; e’er he could hope to see them saints; they must be civilized e’er they could be christianized.” Echoing other like-minded commentators who found Indian civility lacking and in dire need of reformation, these remarks illustrate the English disdain for Indian gender practices and underscore the importance of masculinity to colonialism. As European settlers and goods flooded the region, Indian manhood faced a number of pressures, as did much of native life. Indian masculinity nevertheless continued to be framed by older ideals, while also remaining flexible in the face of an emerging colonial world.

Focusing primarily on Algonquian-speaking coastal Indian groups in southern New England, this article contends that while heredity and age distinctions determined a great deal among these peoples, manhood was something to be accomplished through exemplary deeds, physical distinction, and spiritual preeminence. At the same time, status was becoming more important to defining manhood in the seventeenth century. In the transition from boyhood to manhood, the accumulation of spiritual power was particularly important, imbuing events and actions with supernatural significance as well as marking a man’s identity and status in Indian society. Through rituals and daily activities, Indian men strove to achieve the physical and spiritual excellence found in Native American masculine ideals, which were embodied by both exemplary living men and supernatural entities represented in oral traditions and folklore. In addition, it is important to recognize that just as masculinity was defined against manly ideals and the actions of other men, it was also determined through relations with women and juxtaposed with femininity more broadly.

Indian masculinity was neither monolithic nor static. As scholars have often noted of southern New England, men’s lives there generally revolved around trade, diplomacy, fishing, hunting, and warfare—whereas women primarily gathered foodstuffs, cultivated land, manufactured numerous woven goods, and handled child rearing. While mobility marked much of
male life, other imperatives defined manhood in everyday activities. Men were socialized into their adult roles through a combination of rituals and deeds that might, along with hereditary considerations, determine a man's status and power in society.

Status and Gender

Status was marked in numerous ways among Indians in southern New England, forming one manner in which masculinity was both comprehended and defined. Like the Indian respect for age, there was a basic distinction between common and elite people. Edward Winslow, for example, commented that “the younger for reverence for the elder, . . . do all meane offices whilst they are together, although they bee strangers” and noted that children could not wear their hair in the style reserved for adult men and women. William Wood confirmed the importance of hair, noting its significance not only in marking age, but also in illustrating tribal affiliation and status. Additionally, Roger Williams reported that ordinary and elite natives comported themselves differently when delivering salutations. Some Indians, he claimed, were “Rude and Clownish,” while higher-status Narragansetts acted more “sober and grave.” Christopher Levett witnessed a similar dynamic among Indians living north of the groups primarily under consideration here, noting that “SAGAMORES will scarce speake to an ordinary man” and that social distance was encouraged through speech practices.

Akin to the differing comportment of common and elite men, age and status similarly distinguished women from one another. John Gyles reported that older women, along with captive men, could sit at the entrance of wigwams used for all-male speaking sessions after feasts. Younger women apparently could not gain even peripheral access to these events. Roger Williams claimed that high-status women enjoyed the services of “a Nurse to tend [their] childe.” Noting distinctions between the sexes, both Gyles and Wood both claimed that Indian men enjoyed the privilege of eating first, while the women waited and then ate whatever remained. These accounts suggest that everyday life and gender identities were mediated through various understandings of status, such as gender, heredity, and age. While English notions of hierarchy often framed such accounts of Indian life, this evidence remains suggestive of the degree to which a range of status distinctions marked seventeenth-century Indian gender identities and relations.

While English sources may well overemphasize the importance of status to Indian gender identities, archaeological scholarship on mortuary
practices in the region further illuminates some of the changes occurring in the colonial period. In an analysis of mortuary remains from a number of sites in New England, Elise M. Brenner has noted that burials done prior to European settlement generally had few grave goods and showed little variation in the distribution of goods from grave to grave. Precontact burials also tended to be either isolated or in small groupings. As the seventeenth century progressed, mortuary practices became more ornate, with larger numbers of burials in cemeteries, while some graves exhibited large numbers of grave goods, especially European imports. Among other possibilities, Brenner observed, “the repetition of European clothing, imported weaponry, locks and keys, rings, and unusually large quantities of beads in association with only the most lavishly furnished interments may indicate the use of such imports as markers of political roles in a time of instability and competition.” Her findings suggest that status may have been becoming increasingly important in seventeenth-century Indian life. This view complements evidence from English print sources, suggesting that status was indeed increasingly important to the definition of gender identities. Moreover, other studies of mortuary goods suggest that the symbols associated with status increasingly reflected real differences in wealth and subsistence. Paul Robinson, for example, observed that individuals buried with wampum appear to have enjoyed better health and nutrition. This conclusion points to the fact that aspects of elite adornment like wampum and furs increasingly assumed an economic importance in addition to their significance in both the spiritual and political realms of native life.

While remaining dependent on reciprocity and consensus, Indian governance similarly relied on hierarchical distinctions. In the seventeenth century, men frequently held the most visible positions of power within southern New England Indian societies. While there were female sachems, men were most often invested with this high status. According to William Wood, “It is the custom for their kings to inherit, the son always taking the kingdom after his father’s death. If there be no son, then the queen rules; if no queen, then the next in the blood-royal.” Although English writers overstated the power of sachems when using words like “king” or “queen” to describe Indian governance, heredity and status were extremely important. Such power was reflected in specialized clothing, bodily adornment, and housing, as well as in elite Indian comportment. Wood, for instance, noted that “many of the better sort” wore tattoos distinct from the emblems decorating the bodies of lower-rank Indians. William Bradford and Edward Winslow found similar distinctions in Pokanoket clothing, observing that while deerskins were worn by all Indian men, “the principal of them had a wild cat’s skin, or such like on the one arm.” Thomas Morton confirmed
the symbolic importance of adornment, noting that the “skin of the black wolf . . . is esteemed a present for a prince” and also served as an important exchange item for resolving diplomatic disputes. John Josselyn similarly noted the high value of these skins, adding that wolf skin was “highly esteemed for helping old Aches in old people” and was “worn as a Coat.” William Bradford reported that early in the seventeenth century “sachems and some special persons” used wampum as a component of their adornment. Another observer noted that the Pokanoket sachem Massasoit was adorned with both a black wolf skin and wampum. Other accounts relate that sachems used distinct wigwams and used a specialized “state house” for diplomacy. Additional evidence suggests that the consumption of specialized foods was symbolic of high status. Morton claimed that beaver was “preserved for a dish for . . . Sachems,” in part because it was believed to enhance sexual desire. Josselyn similarly remarked that smoked moose tongue was especially reserved for sagamores.14

A number of elite men advising the sachem shared in similar symbols of power. Roger Williams, for example, noted the existence of both a Narragansett elite and a specific group of advisors to the sachem when he translated two Narragansett terms, one for “Lord” and another for “Wiseman or Counsellour.”15 The English translations Williams provided, however, miss the degree to which leadership roles in Indian society were defined through an individual’s spiritual excellence. For instance, in different ways both powwows and pniises enjoyed a status based in their perceived access to spiritual power. As religious specialists, powwows directed rituals, performed cures, prophesized, and advised their band’s leaders; while as elite military advisors, pniises projected a fearsome reputation derived directly from their ability to cultivate spiritual power.16 As we shall see, cultivating relationships with supernatural entities was essential to defining Indian masculinity in southern New England.

Religion and Manliness

While print sources evince the importance of religion to everyday life and to the formation of gender identities, archeological studies suggest that native religious practices may have intensified as native life was increasingly impacted by English settlement. Reflecting these realities, Indians in southern New England lived in a world rife with religious significance. Throughout the region, the spiritual force manitou imbued activities, beings, and natural objects with supernatural significance. Spiritual power was also represented in the powerful deities Keihtan and Hobbomock as well as in numerous other spiritual entities, all of which were central to determin-
ing one’s status and identity in Indian society. This power was pervasive, marking sacred space and one’s deeds and spiritual associations in numerous ways. Roger Williams noted that the Narragansett recognized the spiritual power inherent in men and women, as well as animals, just as “if they see one man excell others in Wisdome, Valour, strength, Activity &c. they cry out Manitòo A God.” Manitou thus was a force “filling all things, . . . places, and . . . Excellencies” with supernatural significance. Everyday life was framed by this reality. In Narragansett country, for example, Indians reported frequent encounters with “black Foxes” that could not be hunted because they were “Manittóoes,” and thus beyond the reach of a hunter’s bow.18

Mathew Mayhew noted the centrality of supernatural association to individual identity, commenting that “[Indian] parentsof of certain Zeal dedicated their Children to the gods, and Educated them accordingly, observing certain Diet, debarring Sleep & c. yet of the many thus designed, but few obtained their desire.” A poignant example recorded by Roger Williams reveals the depth and intimacy of individual spiritual affinities. As an Indian lay dying from a wound suffered at the hands of “some murtherous English,” Williams reported that he “call’d much upon Muckquachuchquànd [the children’s god], who . . . had appeared to the dying young man, many yeares before, and bid him when ever he was in destresse call upon him.” In addition to the “Children’s god” which the young man summoned, Indians sought out a diverse range of spiritual entities, from deities representing directions or elements to spiritual associations focusing on aspects of individual identity, like the “Womans Gods” mentioned by Williams. Significantly, these accounts suggest that Indian boys and girls similarly attempted to contact and draw on supernatural power. Unfortunately, neither Mayhew nor other authors provide as much detail on the importance of spiritual power to femininity as they do on its importance to masculinity. Nevertheless, it is likely that female status and identity was also deeply influenced by a woman’s ability to access and exemplify spiritual power.19 The existence of specialized spiritual entities reflecting important aspects of rank in Indian culture—gender and age—suggests the importance of supernatural associations to identity and status.

Among these spiritual entities, Hobbomock was a particularly important source of spiritual power for Indian men and women. Edward Winslow reported that this deity appeared variously, “in the shape of a Man, a Deare, a Fawne and Eagle &c,” but emerged most commonly as “a Snake.” Also claiming that there was a connection between status and spiritual power, he noted that while Hobbomock appeared only to “the chiefest and most judicious amongst them,” all Indians, regardless of gen-
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Hobbomock appears to have been particularly significant among spiritual entities in defining Indian manhood.

Descriptions of pniese training further detail the importance of spiritual power to Indian masculinity. Echoing the rituals Mathew Mayhew witnessed on Martha’s Vineyard, Winslow explained that the Pokanoket trained “the most forward and likeliest boyes from their childhood in great hardnesse, and [made] them abstaine from dainty meate,” in addition to other actions intended to prepare initiates for Hobbomock’s appearance. Winslow’s account is not clear as to how boys were chosen for pniese training. Hereditary concerns were indeed important in becoming a sachem and may well have helped determine whether a boy was a good candidate for pniese training. Considering the qualities Winslow noted among these elite warriors, it seems likely that physique, character, and a boy’s perceived potential for contacting the supernatural were probably the paramount considerations in choosing apprentices. It is apparent, however, that a novice’s preparation for Hobbomock’s appearance was physically arduous. In addition to fasting, the boys drank “the juice of sentry and other bitter herbs,” which they vomited onto a platter. They repeated this cycle anew a number of times, until “by reason of faintness they [could] scarce stand on their legs and then [had to] go forth into the cold.” The consumption of these purgatives, along with other tests of physical endurance, like beating “their shins with sticks” and running “through bushes, stumps, and brambles,” aimed at making “them hardy and acceptable” to contact Hobbomock.

The Dutch official Isaack de Rasieres reported a similar ritual in a 1628 letter describing a recent visit to Plymouth. According to his account, when a Pokanoket boy began “to approach manhood he [was] taken by his father, uncle, or nearest friend, and [was] conducted blindfolded into wilderness, in order that he may not know the way, and [was] left there by night or otherwise, with a bow and arrows, and a hatchet and a knife.” Although an adult tutor was no doubt a necessity for a boy to learn the skills essential to manhood, the guide’s role also affirms the Indian reverence for age and the degree to which adult masculinity was defined in opposition to what it meant to be a boy. Moreover, the adult male guide is emblematic of the importance of kinship and fatherhood to Indian men. By English standards, native fatherhood appeared excessive. “Their affections,” Roger Williams commented, “especially to their children, are very strong,” a situation that he claimed made “ther children sawcie, bold, and undutiful.” Despite Williams’s view of the deficiencies of Indian fatherhood, Rasieres’s account illustrates that male kin were keen to train boys.
Rasieres additionally explained that boyhood training focused on refining the skills central to manhood, exploiting “what the scanty earth furnishes at this season, and by hunting.” Having spent the winter in the forest, the boy returned home, where he rested until the end of May. As with Winslow’s account, Rasieres noted the importance of purgatives to the ritual. He did not mention whether the goal of consuming purgatives was to contact Hobboomock. However, considering other accounts of childhood training, it seems likely that contacting the supernatural was integral to the ritual.21

The ability to combine physical abilities with extraordinary supernatural capacities made pniess exemplary individuals in Indian society. Edward Winslow reported that pniess were “men of great courage and wisdom,” who had “more familiarity” with spiritual entities like Hobboomock, a connection that protected these men “from death by wounds” from numerous weapons.22 Fearsome in battle, pniess were marked both by their war paint and by “their courage and boldness,” which made them a dreaded enemy. Witnessing one battle, Winslow commented “it is incredible how many wounds these two puceses [sic] received before they dyed not making any fearful noyse, but catching at their weapons and striving to the last.”23 Masculine ideals did not rest solely on martial skill, however, as pniess were “highly esteemed by all sorts of people” and were among the most important advisors to the sachem, assisting in the collection of tribute, among other duties. These elites were particularly noted for their physical “stature & strength,” qualities that were apparently akin to their general character. Winslow noted that these men earned this high regard, reporting that pniess were “more discreet, courteous, and humane in their carryages than any amongst them, scorning theft, lying and the like base dealings, and [stood] as much upon their reputation as any man.”24 While no doubt individual pniess may have failed to live up to this ideal, Winslow’s description provides insight into the qualities valued in men by Indian society.

Aspects of adornment like tattoos suggested a great deal about an individual—such as spiritual potency, rank, and martial prowess—often taking the form of “bears, deers, mooses, wolves[,] . . . fowls, . . . eagles, [and] hawks” for higher-status individuals and star-shaped designs for lower-status people. Jewelry was similarly fashioned into animal forms representing supernatural associations, just as the animal skins used for clothing were painted with numerous designs.25 Consistent with Hobboomock’s importance to Indian manhood, this spiritual entity’s snakeslike appearance was noted in the adornment of particularly powerful men. During King Philip’s War, for example, Totson, a fearsome warrior of either Wampanoag or Narragansett parentage, marked his supernatural connection to Hobbo-
mock with “two locks ‘ty’d up with red, and a great Rattle-snake skin hanging to the back of his head.” Given that Indian hairstyles and adornment were highly symbolic of rank, gender, tribal allegiance, and spiritual associations, the rattlesnake skin adorning Totson’s head was probably understood in Indian country. Thus, the rattlesnake skin adorning Totson’s hair announced that he was a potent warrior and man to be reckoned with.

Similar symbolism was sometimes integrated into the material culture of the period. For example, King Philip’s war club (fig. 1) illustrates the importance of Hobomock to Indian warfare and manhood. Like a number of other anthropomorphic objects manufactured by Indians—pouches, bowls, pipes, effigies, hairpins, and button molds, for instance—the snake-like form of King Philip’s war club suggests the connection between the natural world and an enchanted world full of spiritual significance. For instance, the indention near the mouthlike form holding the ball at the weapon’s end appears eyelike, just as the triangular dear antler inlays decorating the length of the club are reminiscent of the markings that appear along the back of the timber rattlesnake. The antler inlays were also illustrative of a warrior’s success and potency as a hunter and full of supernatural meaning. In addition to the centrality of the animal world to Indian cosmology, Hobomock was reported to appear sometimes as a fawn or deer. Moreover, the importance of deerskins in preparatory rituals for combat suggests the spiritual potency of deer manitou in warfare. In these ways, the antler inlays were powerful supernatural symbols associated with masculine prowess and warfare.

The wampum inlaid above the antler triangles was also a spiritually charged material, used in ritual, exchange, and in the adornment of sachems as well as of other high-status individuals. As Christopher Miller and George Hamell have observed, sacred materials like wampum beads “were charged with great power and were also potentially very dangerous to the real human-beings who came to possess them.” They also note that Indians incorporated “real shell, crystal, and native copper into ceremonial significant artifacts” implicated in “a rich mythic tradition.” Reflecting the power of Hobomock and suggestive of other diverse supernatural connections, the war club was evocative of its owner’s spiritual potency, martial prowess, and masculine accomplishment.

Masculine ideals also circulated in Indian oral traditions and folklore. Roger Williams remarked that the Narragansett had “many strange Relations of one Wétucks, a man that wrought great Miracles amongst them, and walking upon the waters, &c. with some kind of broken resemblance to the Sonne of God.” While Williams did not further describe Wétucks’s exploits, oral traditions about Maushop, an analogous Wampa-
According to a Wampanoag oral tradition that William Baylies recorded in 1786, the powerful giant Maushop “pulled up the largest trees by the roots” and used them as fuel for cooking “the whale, and the great fish of the sea,” which he shared with neighboring Indians. “To facilitate the catching these fish,” the account reported that Maushop “threw many large stones, at proper distances, into the sea, on which he might walk with greater ease to himself.” In another instance, Maushop smoked an “offering . . . of all the tobacco on Martha’s Vineyard,” and “later knocked the snuff out of his pipe, which formed Nantucket.” Maushop’s actions reflected manly ideals. Specifically, the idea of Nantucket’s creation arriving from a communal offering of tobacco gives a common male activity a supernatural gloss. His deeds similarly echoed the manly ideals proposed: as a master fisherman, Maushop was not only physically impressive and generous but also drew on tremendous supernatural resources. The awesome potential of spiritual power and physical mastery was not solely the province of mythical characters; stories about other living male exemplars also circulated throughout the New England woods.

The Penacook sachem-powwow Passaconaway cut an impressive figure in seventeenth-century New England. Indians reported to William Wood that “Passaconaway . . . [could] make the water burn, the rocks move, the trees dance, [and] metamorphise himself into a flaming man.”

Figure 1. King Philip’s War Club adorned with wampum and triangular deer antler inlays. Reproduced courtesy of the Fruitlands Museum, Harvard, Massachusetts.
Thomas Morton similarly claimed that the powerful sachem-powwow “advanced his honor in his feats or juggling tricks” and noted that among other exploits he impressed Indians by swimming underwater across the Merrimac River. Dazzling English observers, his summer repertoire included making “ice appear in a bowl of fair water.” Passaconaway’s reputation as a spiritually powerful man was emblematic of the degree to which Indians believed that an individual could draw on the supernatural. Spiritual power, according to this logic, might reveal the miraculous, making ice appear on a summer day, or could possibly extend physical abilities, allowing a man to swim a great distance without taking a breath. Apparently, most Indians and a number of Englishmen respected Passaconaway’s supernatural renown. Significantly, Wood also suggested that this type of story circulated freely among Indian groups, pointing out that Indians “constantly affirm[ed] stranger things.”

Manly ideals emerged in discussions of other aspects of Indian life. Roger Williams, for example, described a small bird called the “Sachim” that was so named “because of its Sachim or Princelike courage and Command over greater Birds, that a man shall often see this small Bird pursue and vanquish and put to flight the Crow, and other Birds farre bigger then it selfe.” Through a bird possessing bravery and sway that belied its diminutive size, animals could also illustrate the physical vigor and spirit expected of Indian men. Masculine ideals could be embodied in the actions of the smallest bird, comprehended in the abilities of a supernatural being like Maushop, or drawn from the actions of a powerful living example like Passaconaway. All of these sources of manly ideals illustrate the importance of drawing on supernatural power and perfecting physical skills.

Physical Accomplishment and Becoming a Man

Since Indian life demanded physical vigor, training for manhood began at an early age. A number of activities allowed boys to practice and display masculinity. Wood noted that children learned to swim when they were quite young. Amazed by the endurance of Indian runners, Williams reported that they sometimes held races and could cover vast distances in a day. While skills like running or swimming were essential for both young boys and young girls, other childhood activities socialized boys into the roles they would assume as adult hunters and warriors. Wood was impressed, for example, with boyhood marksmanship: “Little boys with bows made of little sticks and arrows of great bents will smite down a piece of tobacco pipe every shoot a good way off.” He also suggested that activities like marksmanship, running, and swimming were competitive, offering
an arena for contests of masculinity, through which boys could learn important skills while distinguishing themselves from one another according to their abilities.\textsuperscript{36}

Manhood was thus something to be accomplished through myriad physical and spiritual trials. “A man is not accounted a man,” in Indian culture, Edward Winslow observed, “till he doe some notable act or shew forth such courage and resolution as becometh his place.” The importance of individual accomplishment was reflected in Indian naming practices. For instance, Winslow commented, “All their names are significant and variable, for when they come to the state of men and women, they alter them according to their deeds or dispositions.” Roger Williams further elaborated on this link, noting that “Obscure and meane persons amongst” the Narragansetts went nameless.\textsuperscript{37} As numerous sources attest, there were a number of ways by which an Indian boy might fully become a man, earning a name reflecting his deeds and disposition.

Descriptions of Indian sports and games also illustrate the importance of cultivating physical proficiency and spiritual facility. Like running, swimming, or marksmanship, Indian-style football afforded Indian men an opportunity to display their physical abilities. Football clearly presented myriad physical challenges. “Their goals,” William Wood explained, “be a mile long, placed on the sands, which are as even as a board. Their ball is no bigger than a handball, which sometimes they mount in the air with their naked feet; sometimes it is swayed by the multitude; sometimes also it is two days before they get a goal. Then they mark the ground they win and begin there the next day.” Descriptions of the matches also illustrate that individual, family, and village honor were at stake. Williams claimed that Narragansett football games were “great meetings,” that pitted “towne against towne” and thus offered an occasion for both individuals and kin groups to gain prestige.\textsuperscript{38}

Entering into the spirit of competition, English observers compared native sports and feats of endurance directly to English games and competitions among men. Contrasting English and Indian masculine accomplishment, Wood similarly dismissed the “lubberlike wrestling” of Indian footballers, claiming that “one English [was] . . . able to beat ten Indians at football.” Observers like Wood were often perplexed by the Indian practice of activities like football that at first glance appeared familiar. On its surface, football appeared as serious as it was arduous: the players applied war paint and the games could last for days. Nevertheless, Wood was clear that football was not warfare writ small. With violent and bloody English matches no doubt in mind, Wood marveled that when at football, “(though [Indians] play never so fiercely to outward appearance, yet angrier-boiling
blood never streams in their cooler veins) if any man be thrown, he laughs out his foil." After detailing a number of injuries that were absent from Indian football, he noted that the contest also lacked the "the lamentable effects of rage." 39 Williams expressed similar surprise at the rarity of violence emerging from these vigorous contests. Moreover, Wood concluded, there appeared to be no hard feelings involved in the game, "the goal being won, the goods on the one side lost, friends they were at the football and friends they must meet at the kettle." 40

In addition to the football match itself, there were a number of other contests occurring contemporaneously. Wood reported that, during the game, "the boys pipe and the women dance and sing trophies of their husbands conquests." 41 While the progress of the game allowed men to display their physical vigor, the involvement of women and children also was important to the contest. By dancing and performing songs dedicated to their kin’s excellence, the women were not simply enhancing male reputations and reinforcing manly ideals, but they also were illustrating their expertise in boasting and singing—perhaps seeking to best the kin of other competitors with their wit and skill. We should also note that while these activities certainly provided a means for women to display their feminine skill, singing was a sacred activity in Indian country and is thus particularly significant here.

A similar dynamic was probably at work with the boy’s activities. Seventeenth-century English usage suggests that by "piping," Wood probably meant that the boys were yelling or singing. 42 On one level, the boys were competing with their fellows by displaying their skill in singing and their loyalty to kin, while also celebrating the manhood of the players. Important in ritual, singing was also employed in battle. Perhaps the boys were using "their tongues in stead of drummes and trumpets," a wartime practice Roger Williams noted among adult warriors. 43 Additionally, the boys were also witnessing and celebrating the type of physical skill and spiritual power in the football match that would complement their singing abilities in battle. Through the play of the game, manly ideals were thus reinforced and unmanly traits were discouraged. While Wood does not mention the participation of girls, they may have joined either the women or the boys, as singing was one of many skills at which both Indian men and women strove to excel. In any case, the football match offered any number of examples for boys or girls to follow. In the contest, children might witness the genius of wit and song from a notable woman or observe the nimble and vigorous play of a remarkable man. 44

The religious element of the match was apparent in the men’s play. As noted above, the importance of singing points to this connotation.
The degree to which football was imbued with supernatural significance is also apparent in Wood’s description of the bounty at stake: “When they play country against country there are rich goals, all behung with wampomeag [white wampum], mowhacheis [purple wampum], beaver skins, and black otter skins. It would exceed the belief of many to relate the worth of one goal, wherefore it shall be nameless.” While the Indians present at these contests would have seen a goal as indeed valuable, Wood failed to comprehend all that was at stake in a contest for such items. As scholars have long recognized, wampum had spiritual associations and symbolic importance that both predated and coexisted with the European understanding of wampum as currency. While Wood may well have marveled at the treasure involved in these contests, the skins he listed had a supernatural significance transcending European notions of economic value. Animals were extremely important in Indian cosmology, from the mythic black foxes inhabiting Narragansett forests to the numerous manifestations of Hobbomock and other powerful manitous. Christopher LeVett, for example, reported being unable to purchase a martin skin because it was used by a powwow “to lay under his head when he dreamed,” presumably to enhance his connection to the supernatural. LeVett’s experience also suggests that the spiritual significance of items like furs, and by extension wampum, could coexist with the expanding commercial understandings of these items in Anglo-Indian trade.

While evidence detailing ritual preparation for football is lacking, parallels with other male activities are revealing. As with football, Indian gaming was notable for the absence of cursing and violence, activities that Wood felt his English readers connected with such proceedings. Pium and hubbub, the games Wood described, were also striking for the time commitment they required: “these milder spirits . . . sit down, staking their treasures, where they . . . played four and twenty hours, neither eating, drinking, or sleeping in the interim; nay which is most to be wondered at, not quarreling, but as they came thither in peace so they depart in peace.” While less physically arduous than either football or the preparation piiese initiatives undertook, the role of sleep and food deprivation in hubbub probably similarly aided participants in contacting the supernatural. Roger Williams noted that “the chiefe Gamesters amongst them much desire[d] to make their Gods side with them in their Games” and employed special crystals dug from under a “Thunder-smitten” tree. Christopher L. Miller and George R. Hamell have noted that crystals were spiritually powerful, etymologically connected to the Indian words for “soul” and “dream,” and specifically linked with the supernatural world. In this context, the crystal that Williams described was a conduit for spiritual power, thus offering a player a powerful aid in the game.
There are other examples that illustrate the importance of negotiating spiritual power in gaming. In hubbub, players used flat pieces in a dice-like fashion. The game pieces were two-sided, one black and the other white. The latter color had associations similar to the crystal, representing life and harmony. Black was symbolic of “asocial states of being,” like mourning or death. In addition, the game involved physical gestures and invocations that attempted to draw on the supernatural. Hubbub involved a great deal of action—like the physical ordeals integral to pniése training—with the players “smiting themselves on the breast and thighs, crying out ‘hub, hub, hub, hub.’” William Wood translated this refrain into English as “come come come” and claimed that hubbub could be heard “a quarter mile off.” Through the combination of verbal invocations and bodily actions players sought to contact and employ spiritual power in the course of the game. It is unlikely that every player successfully called on his spiritual associations, and thus a man’s relative ability to evoke supernatural power to his advantage in the game distinguished him among his fellows.

Games and sports allowed men to test and display their masculinity in a less deadly fashion than warfare. Moreover, these contests not only enabled men to distinguish themselves individually, but they were also occasions where status distinctions and reciprocity were simultaneously at work. For example, the relation between these activities and individual identity is illustrated by the practice of particularly good piyum players wearing game pieces in their ears. On a communal level, lower-ranking men might illustrate the fluidity of Indian status systems by attaining rank through their deeds in activities like football, while sachems could display their power through the egalitarian act of redistributing wampum and pelts through the play of the game.

Like football and gaming, hunting involved tests of physical endurance and constant encounters with the supernatural. Hunting teemed with spiritual significance. In Indian cosmology, certain animals and activities occasioned special consideration. Crows, hummingbirds, black foxes, conies, deer, wolves, and snakes, among others, were singled out for their supernatural prominence in Indian country. As we saw earlier, manitous could appear in a number of forms, many of them animals. Though the sacred was pervasive in Indian life, spiritual power could prove elusive for hunters. In northern New England, for example, John Gyles reported that in one instance an “Indian powwowed the greatest part of the night,” but despite his best efforts, the hunters were unable to locate the moose they were tracking. If shamanistic techniques failed in the pursuit of game, prey surely tested the physical capacities of the hunters. In a description of a moose hunt, John Josselyn suggested that measuring one’s physical stamina and
skill lay at the heart of the activity. Having encountered a moose, Indian men attempted to "run him down," an activity that could last as long as a day. As a contest, the hunt pitted the hunter’s masculine skill against the prey’s endurance. As Josselyn reported, Indians “never give him over till they have tyred” the animal. The point of the hunt was not simply to kill the moose but to best the animal in strength, endurance, and skill. Sometimes the moose won, illustrating the limits of a hunter’s physical and spiritual potency. In these contests, the hunters showed great respect for their prey, not only in pursuing and dispatching the moose but also through specialized butchering of the carcass, taking “out the heart, and from that the bone, cut[ting] off the left foot behind, draw[ing] out the sinews, and cut[ting] out his tongue, &c.”  

While evidence concerning similar southern New England hunting practices is lacking, both Gyles’s and Josselyn’s observations suggest the links between hunting, spiritual power, and masculine accomplishment. Presumably in the large-scale game drives that Roger Williams noted in Narragansett country—comprised of groups of hunters ranging from twenty to three hundred in number—men had numerous opportunities to distinguish themselves through physical excellence, which, of course, was a sign of spiritual potency for Indians. Williams also explained that hunting was one of the many activities associated with supernatural entities and thus was often followed with celebratory feasts. Additionally, there is evidence that the seemingly more mundane activity of trapping in southern New England was imbued with supernatural meaning. Roger Williams’s observation of Narragansett hunters is revealing: “They are 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.” Thus, even trapping involved encountering and besting the spiritual power and supernatural faculties of prey. For Indians, a hunter’s skills and his practice of the hunt were manifestations of his physical accomplishment and spiritual potency.

**War, Religion, and Masculinity**

The Indian practice of warfare can be seen as an extension of hunting skills and as such was an important means through which manhood was performed. In battle, men utilized the physical skills and spiritual abilities that they had been refining since boyhood. Numerous sources indicate that Indian warfare stressed individual or small-scale engagements, offering ample opportunity to test the martial skill and spiritual efficacy essential to Indian masculinity. English observers were often perplexed
by Indian warfare. Indian men, these observers claimed, simply refused to fight as men should. William Wood, for instance, commented on the “disordered manner” of Indian war making, an approach that lacked “any soldier-like marching or warlike postures” and failed to adhere to proper channels of military authority. Having expended their weaponry in battle, Wood noted with disgust, warriors tended to “run away.”

In a comment revealing one link between war and English masculinity, Captain John Underhill claimed Indian tactics compromised the basis of colonial officers’ masculine honor. Worried that English readers would be puzzled “at the great number of [English] Commanders to so few men,” Underhill reported that Indians fought in small parties and forced colonists to break into smaller bodies. While admitting that these tactics made strategic sense, Underhill explained that the practice affected an officer’s status and honor. “We conceive,” he reported, “a Captaine signifieth thechiefe in way of Command of anybody committed to his charge for the time being whether of more or lesse, it makes no matter in power though in honour it doth.” For high-status men like Underhill, successful warfare turned on appropriate recognition of rank. With a battle composed of small-scale skirmishes, officers like Underhill lost the honor that went along with the status of commanding the large forces essential to European-style military engagements.

The differences between Indian and English styles of warfare left both groups puzzled at times. Early in the Pequot War, for example, colonial forces unfurled their colors and beat their drums to begin a battle. In response, Pequot warriors “laughed” at the English call to war, which by Indian standards of warfare and masculinity may have seemed illogical and decidedly unmanly. Underhill was similarly perplexed by the Indian approach to battle, noting that once there was “no advantage against [the Pequots] in open field,” the English asked their Indian allies to engage the enemy. Witnessing the ensuing battle, he declared: “I dare boldly affirme, they might fight seven yeares and not kill seven men: they came not neere one another, but shot remote, and not point blanke, as wee often doe with our bullets, but at ravers, and then they gaze up in the skie to seewhere the Arrow falls, and not untill it is fallen doe they shoot againe, the fight is more for pastime, then to conquer and subdue enemies.”

As we have seen, archery training was a constant throughout boyhood and manhood. Considering the importance of these abilities to defining masculinity, the warriors Underhill witnessed were probably fighting in a manner that focused on displaying and testing archery skills rather than pursuing battle in a fashion that maximized enemy casualties. While causalities were indeed rare by English standards, the techniques used to dis-
patch enemy warriors confirm the importance of individual bravery as well as of contests of physical and spiritual skill in Indian warfare. Roger Williams commented, for example, that while Indian warfare occasioned few casualties, “all that are slain are commonly slain with great Valour and Courage: for the Conqueror ventures into the thickest, and brings away the Head of his Enemy.” This type of combat was an intimate affair, offering myriad opportunities for men to display martial skill and earn renown as exemplary warriors.

Additional evidence illustrates the link between individualized warfare and masculine accomplishment. For instance, a number of accounts indicate that conflicts between different groups of Indians were often caused by insults or ignited by revenge for past affronts. At times, such disagreements could be decided by one-on-one combat. Lion Gardener claimed, for instance, that after an argument over the allotment of Pequot captives the Mohegan sachem “Unchus challenged the Narragansett Sachem [Miantonomi] out to a single combat, but he would not fight without all his men; but they were pacified, though the old grudge remained still, as it doth appear.” Fortunately, Thomas Morton commented on the conduct of these contests, noting that while Indians were “not apt to quarel one with another,” disagreements could be decided by one-on-one combat. Equating the contest with English duels, he explained the method of combat: “they have cast lots for the cheif of the trees,” then once behind their respective trees, the combatants “let fly [their] shafts, and to gall his enemy.” The match continued in this fashion, as the men “use[d] much agility in the performance” and persisted “in the execution of their vengeance” until “one or both be slain.”

Surely there were easier ways to kill a man. Like Indian hunting methods or the Indian battle Underhill described, this type of combat was a contest of masculine skill and bravery. Success in combat, Morton observed, was memorialized in a man’s adornment: “They count it the greatest honor that can be to the surviving combatant to show the scars of the wounds, received in this kind of Conflict. And if happen to be on the arm as those parts are most in danger in these cases, they will always wear a bracelet upon that place of the arm, as a trophy of honor, to their dying day.” Akin to the tattoos, jewelry, and other aspects of adornment that announced a man’s spiritual associations, these scars and bracelets would be a powerful reminder of a warrior’s reputation.

In addition to stressing individual contests within a battle, Indian combat idealized the endurance of pain as a sign of bravery and manliness. In 1623, for instance, the Massachusetts warrior Wituwanat bragged to Miles Standish of killing Englishmen and commented on their undignified and
unmanly manner of dying. The warrior “derided” English weakness, noting that “they died crying, making sowre faces, more like children than men.” Englishmen failed to act manly and proved unable to endure pain as Indian men presumably would. Other accounts, however, suggest that Englishmen also were capable of exemplifying the type of manly comportment expected of Indian men. In 1636, Pequot warriors tortured the English trader John Tilley. His captors “tied him to a stake, sled his skin off, put hot imbers betweene the flesh and the skinne, cut off his fingers and toes, and made hatbands of them,” John Underhill reported. In addition to these acts, John Winthrop related that the Pequot “cut off his hands, and sent them before, and after cut off his feet.” Having survived “three days after his hands were cut off,” Tilley illustrated to his captors “that he was a stout man, because he cried not in his torture.” Unlike the childlike and unmanly Englishman whom Wituwamat mocked, Tilley eschewed tears and earned respect for his manly comportment. Even death, these episodes suggest, offered an opportunity to display one’s manly prowess.

Indian warriors endeavored to match such bravery and physical stamina with spiritual excellence. To this end, powwows and warriors used individual and corporate rituals to divine the possibility of victory and to draw on the spiritual power necessary for success in combat. Fighting itself was also full of supernatural significance, serving as a means to both display and accrue spiritual power. Whether through devotions or in combat, not all men could evoke manitou equally. While learning to cultivate spiritual power and associations was essential to warrior training, warfare was the occasion of specialized rituals that sought to evoke powerful manitous. During the Pequot War, for instance, John Mason witnessed a group of Narragansetts allied with the English “suddenly gathering into a Ring, one by one, making solemn Protestations how galliantaly they would demean themselves, and how many Men they would Kill.” Mary Rowlandson gave a more elaborate description of this type of preparatory ritual during King Philip’s War. The ceremony involved a combination of bodily and verbal actions that focused on the accumulation of individual and group spiritual power. The warriors gathered with a powwow and “kneedled upon a deerskin with the company round him in a ring, who kneeled, and striking upon the ground with their hands and with sticks, and muttering or humming with their mouths; besides him who kneeled in the ring, there also stood one with a gun in his hand.” As we have seen, animal skins could symbolize, contain, and serve as conduits for supernatural power. Clearly the deerskin was important in the ritual Rowlandson described: “Then he on the deerskin made a speech and all manifested assent to it, and so they did many times together.” The warriors then “bade him with the gun go out
of the ring, which he did, but when he was out, they called him in again.” By this point, the powwow had apparently contacted the supernatural, as Rowlandson reported “he seemed to make a stand; so they called him with greater earnestness, but he stood reeling and wavering as if he knew not whether he should stand or fall or which way to go.”

Hoping to draw on the spiritual power that the entranced powwow had engaged, the warriors in the ring “called [on] him with exceeding great vehemency, all of them, one and another. After a little while he turned in, staggering as he went with his arms stretched out, in either hand a gun.” This signaled that the ritual was successful: “As soon as he came in, they all sang and rejoiced exceedingly awhile. And then he upon the deerskin made another speech unto which they all assented in a rejoicing manner,” and the warriors headed to battle. Apparently the ritual was effective: as Rowlandson ruefully noted, upon their departure for battle the Indians “acted if the devil had told them” of the success they would enjoy in sacking Sudbury.

The importance of supernatural prowess to Indian warfare is frequently noted in seventeenth-century sources. In one instance, Williams dismissively reported to Winthrop that Pequot warriors responded to English preparations for war in late 1636 by “comfort[ing] themselves... that a witch [powwow] amongst them will sink the pinnaces by diving under water and making holes etc.” Edward Johnson similarly noted the trepidation caused by reports of Pequot warriors “whose bodyes were not to be pierced by ... sharp rapiers or swords of a long time, which made some of the Souldiers think the Devil was in them, for their were some Powwows among them, which work strange things with the help of Satan.” A little over a decade after the Pequot War, Williams reported that in addition to the more direct physical attempts made on the life of the Mohegan sachem Uncas, Narragansett powwows tried to kill him by using spiritual power.

In the early twentieth century, the anthropologist Frank Speck recorded an oral tradition concerning a 1645 Narragansett-Mohegan battle. The account suggests some of the ways that warriors may have understood such instances of remarkable martial prowess. While it is difficult to know the changing content and character of the tradition as it passed from generation to generation among Mohegans, the account complements English print sources in stressing the importance of spiritual power defining masculine accomplishment for warriors. Moreover, it deals with an ongoing conflict between the Mohegan and the Narragansett that has been well-documented by historians. As we have seen, the hostilities between the Mohegan and the Narragansett at midcentury occasioned a great deal of supernatural effort. It should not be surprising that the importance of spiritual power continued to resonate in Mohegan accounts of the same events.
Speck’s informant reported that after an initial Narragansett attack, the Mohegans quickly retreated into a palisaded fort. Early in the siege, a particularly potent Narragansett warrior “had climbed a certain tree” and used his view of enemy positions to direct fire into the fort. From his secure vantage point, he also insulted the Mohegans, asking the besieged Indians, “Are you hungry?” After repeatedly failing to kill the Narragansett warrior, the Mohegans concluded that their enemy drew on powerful supernatural forces, making him resistant to their bullets. To counter Narragansett success, the Mohegans called on a similarly spiritually potent warrior of their own. Like the Indian duels described by Morton, this battle was an individual contest, as the Mohegan warrior “ordered the others to desist.” Where ordinary musket balls had failed, supernatural projectiles were required. To this end, the Mohegan prepared a special projectile, “taking a bullet from his pouch he swallowed it.” The musket ball reappeared at the man’s navel and he swallowed it again. The projectile appeared in the warrior’s navel anew, presumably having accumulated more supernatural potency. After repeating the cycle once more, the potent warrior “loaded his rifle with the charmed ball and... fired at the man in the tree.” The Narragansett warrior, bested by the accuracy and spiritual potency of the Mohegan warrior’s shot, “dropped out of the branches dead.”

Similar principles were at work several decades later during King Philip’s War. Major Symon, a renowned warrior of Pequot and Narragansett parentage fighting alongside the Connecticut forces, possessed “extraordinary strength and courage” as well as keen supernatural faculties. According to William Hubbard, during one expedition Symon went “to sleep, but toward Morning he fell into a Dream, wherein he apprehended the Indians were upon him, where suddenly rising up he espied the Indians coming toward him, but presently presenting his Gun against them, he so frightened them, that they gave him an Opportunity to make an Escape from a Multitude of them.” Dreams held tremendous spiritual significance among Indians in the region and Symon’s experience was emblematic of his ability to call on powerful manitou in wartime even as he lay sleeping. Both seventeenth-century English examples and later Indian oral traditions illustrate the various ways spiritual power might be employed in warfare: extending a warrior’s physical abilities, protecting a man from enemy weapons, enhancing the capabilities of one’s weaponry, and injuring or killing a foe.

For Indian men, spiritual power was also understood as a measure of manliness on the battlefield. Edward Johnson reported blasphemous Pequot warriors “saying the Englishman’s God was all one Flye, and that English men was all one Squaw, and themselves all one Moor-hawkes.”
In this instance, the warriors made an implicit connection between manliness and spiritual power, attributing the weakness of colonial soldiers to a lack of supernatural potency, by comparing English manitou to an insect. Apparently, an absence of spiritual power made these Englishmen effeminate and analogous to women, presumably incapable of or unwilling to engage in manly warfare. From the Indian viewpoint, the English soldiers appeared spiritually impotent, as men lacking manitou—men who ceased to be manly. No Indian man wanted to display such qualities, and thus warriors endeavored to exhibit the martial skill and bravery indicative of a spiritually potent and manly warrior.

While English soldiers may well have appeared effeminate and spiritually bereft to Indians at the onset of the Pequot War, such perceptions seem to have changed by the conflict’s end. The Niantic sachem Ninigret’s warriors, for example, declared to the English forces that they thought the Pequot “were good Men . . . and they would fight for them,” a comment that moved the colonial army to challenge the Indians to battle. In a revealing reply, the Niantic warriors said “that they would not Fight with the English Men, for they were Spirits, but would Fight with Onkos.” By utterly destroying the Pequot village at Mystic, the English may have appeared to be mustering powerful manitous in their own right, making fighting Uncas a more agreeable option for the Niantic warriors. Together these examples suggest some of the complex ways that manliness and supernatural power were connected.

A number of accounts suggest that success in warfare also was a means of accumulating and displaying spiritual power. In one instance, Pequot warriors claimed that they had “one amongst [them] that if he could kill but one you more, he would be equall with God,” a comment that was most noteworthy to the English for its blasphemy. Interestingly, the Pequot claim suggests that successfully humiliating or dispatching enemies in battle was a means for warriors to both accumulate and display spiritual power. This contention is further bolstered by Roger Williams’s observation that individual “excellence” was viewed as a manifestation of manitou among Indians.

Perhaps this godlike Pequot warrior was akin to the man that a group of Mohegan warriors marveled at killing in the summer of 1637. Writing to Winthrop, Richard Davenport reported that a Mohegan warrior came to his house bearing “the [hands] of a great Sachem, as they said greater then Sassacus, he being Momonotuk Samm, a might fellow for currage,” whose reputation recent English experience confirmed. By comparing the Pequot warrior they had defeated to the great sachem Sassacus, the Mohegan offer us a clue as to why they eagerly displayed trophies from their victory.
over the renowned Momonotuk Samm. Reflecting a number of accounts, Mather reported that “at the very mention of [Sassacus’s] name the Narragansett trembled, saying, he was all one a God, no body could kill him.” For Indians, names often memorialized an individual’s deeds and evoked their spiritual associations. Speck, for instance, argued that the names of powerful sagamores and shamans among northern Algonquian groups like the Penobscot contained certain suffixes—such as -ando and -hanto—that were associated with extraordinary supernatural power. A similar dynamic appears in southern New England, where names could also resonate with supernatural meaning. As Karen Kupperman has noted, the two Indian men most closely associated with the early history of Plymouth Colony—Squanto and Hobbomock—used names that were derived from powerful spiritual beings and were meant to advertise their supernatural potency. While we will probably never know exactly why the Narragansett found Sassacus’s name so terrifying, it appears that a large part of his prowess was derived from Indian perceptions of his spiritual potency—a fact that was embodied by his very name. Any sachem who was compared to Sassacus was likely a formidable physical and spiritual foe. Killing Momonotuk Samm was thus an extraordinary event rife with personal and supernatural meaning for the victorious Mohegan warriors.

If dispatching an enemy in battle was indeed perceived as means of accruing and displaying spiritual power, the Mohegan excitement over killing Momonotuk Samm takes on a meaning that likely escaped Davenport as he wrote to Winthrop. The display of the great Momonotuk Samm’s hands was a symbol of the Mohegan warrior’s growing potency, having defeated a physically and spiritually powerful foe. Much of the evidence also suggests that individual spiritual potency was not a constant. While men might cultivate and maintain their relationships with diverse spiritual entities, the enchanted world could unmake a warrior just as it could define his power and identity on better days. Unfortunately for Momonotuk Samm, it was the Mohegan warrior’s manitou and physical prowess that proved victorious.

Trophy-taking and spiritual power continued to be an important part of warfare in the region well after the Pequot War. Yet testing one’s ability and manhood by the highly stylized and ritualized practices of dodging arrows and of dancing, which were reported at the beginning of the century, appear to have faded with the widespread adoption of European weaponry and the modification of Indian tactics to meet colonial realities. Through their ongoing connections with Hobbomock and other spiritual entities, many Indians may have claimed special protection against English weapons, but few appeared willing to approach fighting with guns as their
fathers and grandfathers had approached fighting other Indians with less deadly weaponry, like bows and arrows fired at a distance—guns were simply too dangerous. Instead, Indian tactics changed to optimize the ferocity of European weaponry. In this way, Indian masculinity and warfare adapted to changing colonial realities, affirming the importance of religion to combat but recognizing the need to change the practice of war in the face of new enemies and novel weapons.

**Marriage and Male Honor**

Manhood was proven not simply vis-à-vis other men in play or in warfare but also through relations with women. Whatever forms Indian conjugal relations may have taken prior to colonization, it is clear that by the early decades of the seventeenth century, marriage—in addition to being an expression of a diverse range of concerns, from deep affection to kin ties—was also tied to male honor and power.

Generally, Algonquian marriage practices were notable for their flexibility in terms of the freedom to choose mates and the ease of divorce for both men and women. Yet marriage appears to have encouraged the formation of an elite within some Algonquian groups. Edward Winslow pointed out that a sachem would only marry a woman “equall to him in birth,” claiming that “otherwise, they say their seede would become ignoble.” While Winslow was focusing on elite men, his observation also suggests that heredity was important in defining womanhood. Moreover, he additionally argued that the polygyny practiced by sachems did not threaten the leader’s hereditary line. The secondary wives, he claimed, did not enjoy the same status as the primary wife. Unlike the polygamy practiced by high-status men, elite women apparently could not gain prestige and power through marrying multiple husbands.

This appears to have been true for pniies as well as sachems. The Pokanoket pnie Hobbomock, a close advisor to Massasoit living among the English in Plymouth, fit many of the manly ideals described earlier in this essay. William Bradford noted that the he was “a proper lusty man, and a man of account for his valour and parts amongst the Indians” as well as for his exemplary service to the English. Like Massasoit, Hobbomock’s reputation and status were marked by his having a number of wives and a large family. While high-status women could not gain prestige and power through marrying multiple husbands, it is important to note the degree to which the rank of both the sachem and the primary wife depended on the lower status of the secondary wives. Primary wives indeed appear to have been accorded more power than were secondary wives. One source noted...
that while the sachem Massasoit had five wives, only the “queen” accompanied the Pokanoket leader to the widower William Bradford’s wedding to his second wife, Alice Southworth. This was an important diplomatic occasion that at least four other sachems attended, in addition to a number of their men. It seems likely that the involvement of Massasoit’s primary wife was a reflection of the couple’s hereditary ties as well as the status of this marriage in comparison to the sachem’s connection to his secondary wives. Among other considerations, she was probably also present to represent powerful kin interests of her own.

The extant sources also illustrate that exchange was central to Indian marriages in the seventeenth century. Roger Williams, for example, noted the importance of a potential Narragansett husband’s successfully offering “a dowry to the Father or Mother or guardian of the Maide. . . . if the man be poor, his friends and neighbors contribute money toward the dowry.” Such bride-price practices probably reinforced existing ties between kin networks, while also remaining symbolic of a potential mate’s good intentions and his ability to contribute meaningfully for both the bride and her various relations and to compensate the bride’s family for their loss of a kinswoman’s labor. Moreover, Williams’s observation also suggests the importance of marriages to community well-being. Kin ties secured through the communal contributions toward bride-price promised a number of benefits, such as securing protection from hostile neighbors, strengthening trade relations, or simply reinforcing long-standing friendships. Because women did most of the agricultural work in Indian communities, bride-price was also important to attracting particularly hard-working and productive women for both the potential husband and his kin. Roger Williams claimed that the polygamy of high-status Narragansett men flowed from the “desire of Riches, because the Women bring in all the increase of the Field, &c. the Husband onely fisheth, hunteth &c.”

Increased agricultural production would certainly increase a community’s ability to trade for goods that were becoming increasingly valuable and coveted in an emerging colonial world. In all of these ways, individual gifts from various villagers together formed the bride-price that was key not only to the success of the marriage but also to the fortune of any number of other community interests.

For the potential husband, the existence of bride-price practices suggests another arena of masculine accomplishment that was probably every bit as important and competitive as other aspects of masculinity, like games, hunting, or warfare. A man’s success likely turned on his physical and spiritual excellence. Men additionally needed to be persuasive and charming to convince potentially recalcitrant parents and relatives of the
soundness of their characters and capacities as well as to convince friends and neighbors of a humbler suitor to part with the foodstuffs, goods, or wampum necessary to secure the marriage and assure future good relations among new kin.

There is also evidence that suggests that male honor was bound up in other aspects of marriage. Roger Williams found Narragansett practices surrounding adultery particularly interesting. Explaining that adultery might end in divorce, Williams also noted that cuckolded husbands could seek revenge “upon the offender, before many witnesses, by many blows and wounds, and if it be to Death, yet the guilty resists not, nor is his Death revenged.” Williams’s observations suggest that male sexual honor may have been restored through violence, while for women divorce appears to have been the more typical recourse.

The importance of marriage to male honor and in reaching adult manhood is further illustrated by Isaack de Rasieres’s observation of male instruction echoing the elite warrior pniies training discussed earlier. Rasieres reported that after a young man successfully endured the physical and spiritual trials presented by his adult guide, he returned “home, and [was] brought by the men and women, all singing and dancing, before the Sackima [sachem]; . . . and if he [was] fat and sleek, a wife [was] given to him.” While Rasieres did not explain how the marriage was arranged, his observation is striking in that it illustrates the importance of proving one’s manhood in Indian society as a precondition to marriage and as an avenue to full adult status. It is possible, for example, that prospective bride would reject a suitor who failed in his physical and spiritual trials. Regardless, the fact that the passage from boyhood to manhood was marked by a public celebration in which a wife was the sachem’s and village’s gift for joining the adult world illustrates the degree to which Indian manhood was defined through more hierarchical social and gender relations than is often noted.

While it is difficult to determine precisely what was at work in this instance, a dispute recorded by Thomas Morton provides further insight into the importance of marriage to male status and honor. In particular, the incident illuminates the centrality of harmonious exchanges of hospitality and gifts to individual and communal honor, while also suggesting some of the complexities involved in marriages between high-status Indians. The marriage of the Pawtucket sachem Montowompate (also known as Black James) to the Penacook sachem-powwow Passaconaway’s daughter Wenuhus probably seemed like a prudent match to all involved. Relations apparently began smoothly enough; Passaconaway held a great feast to celebrate the couple’s union. Thomas Morton noted that this was a typical practice among local Indians. After the initial feast, the couple returned

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to Montowompate’s home in Saugus and shortly thereafter Passaconaway sent attendants to wait on the pair. Wanting both to reciprocate his father-in-law’s hospitality and to display his power, Montowompate entertained the renowned sachem’s men. Morton claimed that the occasion was a success, as “the attendants were gratified.” These marriage celebrations offered occasion for reciprocal acts of respect that were probably intended, among other things, to assure good future relations.92

Some background is necessary in order to understand what transpired after the auspicious beginning of the union. The marriage of Montowompate and Wenuhus probably occurred in the 1620s. This was a period of decline for the Pawtucket, while the Penacook remained relatively strong. In 1619, the great Pawtucket sachem Nanepashemet was killed during an Abenaki raid. Such warfare, in addition to epidemics in 1616–17, 1630, and 1633, greatly reduced the power of the Pawtucket. By 1630 the signs of decline were particularly acute: Passaconaway could muster five hundred men to Montowompate’s thirty to forty men. While long-standing ties clearly existed between the Penacook and the Pawtucket, Passaconaway may well have viewed the marriages of two of his daughters to Montowompate and his younger brother Wenepaweekin as an opportunity to extend his power over nearby communities in decline.93 So, while other considerations were in play in the wedding, important demographic and political considerations were also at work.

For her part, we know that Wenuhus eventually decided to visit her girlhood home shortly after the marriage. While Morton’s account is silent on the matter, Wenuhus may have returned for a number of reasons. Perhaps she missed familiar people and places. Wenuhus may have been dissatisfied with her new husband. Indian women, after all, enjoyed latitude in choosing and divorcing mates. It is also possible that the trip was part of ritualized feasting that sought to bind the two villages together just as the marriage purported to draw Wenuhus and Montowompate close. Regardless of the reason for the trip, Montowompate selected a number of men to convey her to Penacook. Roger Williams reported similar convoys in Narragansett country, with warriors accompanying sachems and their families. Such arrangements not only guaranteed the safety of a high-status family but also served to display the power of a given sachem. The convoys between Penacook and Saugus were probably similar to the groups described by Williams. Once the party arrived at Penacook they feasted yet again, and then shortly after the celebration, Montowompate’s men returned home. After some time passed, Wenuhus resolved also to return to Saugus. Rather than sending her home with a convoy of Penacook men, Passaconaway relayed word that Montowompate should retrieve his wife.94
At this point relations between the two men soured. Insulted by Passaconaway’s suggestion, Montowompate declared that he had “his men to wait upon her to her fathers territories, as it did become him: but now she had an intent to return, it did become her father, to send her back with a convoy of his own people: and that it stood not with his reputation to make himself or his men so servile, to fetch her again.” The young sachem appears to have been operating on the assumption that he and Passaconaway were equals who should accord one another mutual respect. Perhaps due to his reputation and the declining power of his son-in-law’s family, Passaconaway demanded what he thought was a reasonable amount of deference. Montowompate claimed that bowing to Passaconaway’s request not only put his honor at risk but also threatened the reputations of his men.

As might be expected, Passaconaway “was enraged” by Montowompate’s failure to “esteem him at a higher rate,” and found the younger sachem’s actions an affront to “his daughters bloud,” expressing further shock that her family connections were not accorded more respect. Not about to submit to Montowompate’s terms, Passaconaway repeated his earlier demand: if the younger sachem wanted his wife to return then it “were best to send or come for her.” This reply served only to escalate tensions. Montowompate retorted that he refused “to under value himself,” telling Passaconaway that he could either send his daughter to Saugus or enjoy her company at home.

Both men refused to negotiate, and Wenuhus apparently remained with her father. This dispute illustrates both the degree to which male honor was tied to communal activities and the importance of elite marriages to group identity. Moreover, the episode also offers a glimpse at how male honor affected a sachem’s actions. While Montowompate was clearly angry on his own accord, the dissatisfaction of his men also deeply influenced his reaction to the situation. Communal male honor made it impossible for the younger sachem to submit to his father-in-law’s demands. This observation takes on a greater importance if we consider the significance of consensus to Indian governance. From Passaconaway’s comments, it is clear that the older sachem felt that having Montowompate’s men convey Wenuhus to Saugus was an appropriate recognition of the renowned sachem’s heredity and power. In Saugus, the gesture was read differently. Both Montowompate and his men found Passaconaway’s refusal to accord reciprocal respect a grave insult to both kin and community.

Perhaps Montowompate’s people would have held another feast for the older sachem’s men on their arrival with the young woman. In the end, they could neither brook the insult of being denied the opportunity of
providing hospitality to Passaconaway’s men nor endure the indignity of making the return trip up the Merrimac. Unfortunately, we do not know what Wenuhus thought of the matter. Perhaps she was dissatisfied with her recent marriage or angered by Montowompate’s affront to her family’s honor and was quite happy with, or even encouraged, her father’s attitude toward the young sachem from Saugus. Regardless, it seems unlikely that she let events be dictated by the men involved—her family, village, and personal honor were also at stake as events unfolded.”

**Manly Speech**

In the absence of evidence detailing Wenuhus’s involvement in the marriage dispute, the insults used by Indian men offer another means of illustrating how masculinity was defined in relation to femininity. Like gaming, sports, and warfare, Indian speech offered an important arena for masculine accomplishment. Colonial sources offer only imperfect glimpses of Indian speech. Yet, as Kathleen Bragdon has pointed out, speech acts offer an important avenue to understanding seventeenth-century Indian culture.97 Speech had significance in an oral culture that is difficult to discern today. James Axtell has argued that Indians existed in “a predominately voice-and-ear world in which a word was a real happening, an event of power and personal force.” Like so much else in Indian culture, words and speech were manifestations and expressions of spiritual power. According to Roger Williams, the Narragansett viewed speech as one of the myriad examples of spiritual power in everyday life, noting that “a stranger that can relate newes in their owne language, they will stile him Manittòo, a God.”98 William Wood confirmed this view, pointing out that Indians “love any man that can utter his mind in their words,” and noted their special reverence for their own polyglots. Observing that Indians exhibited tremendous pride in learning to speak English, he reported that they employed their linguistic skills not only to converse with English speakers, but were also eager to use their talents in “puzzling stranger Indians . . . with an unheard language.”100 While learning English certainly afforded a number of practical advantages in trade and diplomacy, using a foreign language to address outlying Indian groups unfamiliar with the idiom appears strange at first glance. Yet, considering the role of spiritual power in speech it is likely that employing novel linguistic talents in this fashion was one of the many ways of displaying and expressing masculine skill. While such a conclusion is admittedly speculative, it is clear that excellence in linguistic skills and oration was an important component of masculine accomplish-
speech suggests that linguistic skill was similarly important to colonial manhood.¹⁰¹

Like the connection between oration and the supernatural, specific styles of speech were central to Indian notions of hospitality, status, and manly comportment. William Wood, for example, claimed that Indians were “of a kind and affable disposition” and were careful in their comportment. Roger Williams similarly praised Narragansett culture, commenting “they are remarkably free and courteous, to invite all Strangers in; and if any come to them upon any occasion, they request them to come in, if they come not of themselves.” Listening was a way of according respect; Williams noted that the Narragansett were “impatient (as all men and God himselfe is) when their speech is not attended and listened to.” While “words of great flattery” were indeed common in conversation, they were employed especially for addressing sachems. Specific styles of speech displayed male honor and status. Eschewing and reviling “churlish” behavior, Wood noted that Indians valued “he that speaks seldom and opportune, being as good as his word, is the only man they love.” Roger Williams found that higher-status Narragansetts were “sober and grave, and yet chearfull in a meane, and as ready to begin a Salutation as to Resalute,” a practice which he claimed that the English encouraged. He also claimed that Indians uttered the phrase “My heart is good” as a means of professing “their honestie; they naturally confessing that all goodnesse is first in the heart.”¹⁰²

In addition to valuing truthfulness in conversation, Indian speech-ways also reflected status distinctions important to honor. In one striking example, Thomas Mayhew Sr. ignored a sachem who had been admitted into his house. The Englishman’s rudeness was essential to a larger strategy: “being acquainted with their Customes, [he] took no notice of the Prince’s being there (it being a point of Honour incumbent on the Inferiour to Salute the Superiour:) a considerable time being past the Prince broke Silence, and said . . . Mr. Mayhew, are you well?” Mayhew intended to assert his sovereignty over Martha’s Vineyard sachems and keenly used his knowledge of native culture to make the visiting Indian leader submit.¹⁰³ As these examples suggest, speech and comportment were ways of showing allegiance, recognizing political power, and marking status among Indian men.

While much of the extant evidence stresses the seriousness of Indian speech, a number of accounts emphasize the importance of wit in oration. William Wood claimed, “Laughter in them is not common, seldom exceeding a smile, never breaking out into such a loud laughter as do many of our English.” He claimed that Indians not only eschewed laughter but also viewed being laughed at as a grave affront. Laughter during trade was
particularly problematic: “If a man be in trade with them and the bargain be almost struck, if they perceive you laugh they will scarce proceed, supposing you laugh because you have cheated them.” As it seems likely that an English trader would find laughter at the end of an exchange similarly disconcerting, we might reasonably question Wood’s claim of Indian antipathy to laughter. Indeed, the Englishman felt it necessary to temper his description of the Indian aversion to humor, commenting that while Indians were “not much addicted to laughter... they [are] not of a dumpish, sad nature, but rather naturally cheerful.” Edward Winslow’s experience with the Nemasket sachem Corbitant also belies Wood’s claim that Indians refrained from laughter. He commented that Corbitant was known for his political acumen and enjoyed “merry jests & squibs, & [was] never better pleased than when the like are returned againe upon him.”104 In a passage illustrative of male interests, John Gyles also noted that wit was highly valued among Indian men in northern New England. After a feast, he reported that the men removed to a wigwam, “some relating their warlike exploits, others something comical, others give a narrative of their hunting.” Women were excluded from this wigwam and the occasion offered men an opportunity to engage in ritualized speech. Gyles reported that “the seniors give maxims of prudence and grave counsels to the young men, though every one’s speech be agreeable to the run of his own fancy, yet they confine themselves to rule and but one speaks at a time.”105

While the examples cited thus far have illustrated the content and conduct of male speech, the insults that Indian men employed in battle further illuminate the relationship between masculinity and femininity. Insults were more than mere play. As Roger Williams pointed out, “mocking (between their great ones) is a great kindling of Warres amongst” Indians in southern New England.106 As one might expect from Williams’s comments, insults and boasting appear in a number of seventeenth-century accounts. English and Indian men agreed that a high ideal in battle was to “fight like a man,” as Captain Miles Standish once demanded of a sachem. Indians would have generally agreed with Standish’s view of proper martial conduct. During the Pequot War, for example, Captain John Underhill reported that Pequot warriors donned “English clothes, and came to the Fort jeering of them, and calling Come and fetch your Englishmen’s clothes againe; come out and fight, if you dare; you dare not fight, you are all one like women.” Beyond this general equation of manliness and war, however, there was little shared ground on what constituted the manly conduct of war. Both groups, nevertheless, joined in the conviction that being called a “woman” was a particularly sharp affront.107

The changes occurring as a result of colonization could be under-
stood as feminizing Indian men. Noting one of these shifts, William Wood praised the Narragansett for their industry in becoming the “mintmasters” of southern New England: they dominated the manufacture of the wampum used as currency by Indians and Europeans alike. The shift to increased wampum production apparently caused the Narragansett to eschew war in favor of profit through trade. While the Pequot also coveted the wampum trade, the way they couched their understanding of Narragansett cultural change is revealing. Wood reported that the “the Pequots call them women-like men.” He contended that as the Narragansett were unable to respond in kind, “they rest secure under the conceit of their popularity and seek rather to grow rich by industry than famous by deeds of chivalry.”108 While it is uncertain whether or not Narragansett men shared the conviction that the expansion of the wampum trade was indeed feminizing Indian men who might otherwise define their identities along other lines, this instance does highlight one early example of how changing work regimes in an emerging colonial society influenced gender roles. The Pequot men apparently felt that making wampum was hardly an appropriate occupation for a man in a world that put a high value on warriors.109

Other English accounts offer glimpses of how Indian men viewed appropriate gender relations. In 1634, William Wood claimed that Indian men felt that English gender relations wasted female labor and condemned the colonists “for their folly in spoiling good working creatures.” Thomas Lechford recorded a similar sentiment seven years later.110 These instances are striking in that it appears that the Indian men’s critique of English masculinity rested on the failure of the Europeans to properly control female labor. Other Indian criticisms of English marriage practices express similar views. Wood noted the chagrin of a sagamore who witnessed an English woman aggressively berating her husband. With her voice “thundering in his ears,” the unnamed sagamore headed to the safety of a neighbor’s home. Within the relative peace of this new locale, the Indian man noted that the English husband “was a great fool to give her the audience and no correction for usurping his character and abusing him by her tongue.”111 This was not the only aspect of English marriage that Indian men found odd. William Bradford and Edward Winslow reported the Pokanoket sachem Massasoit’s “marvelling that [King James] would live without a wife.” North of Pokanoket country, a sagamore queried Christopher Levett as to “how many wives King JAMES had,” and, when told that the English sovereign was a monogamous widower, “asked . . . who then did all the Kings worke.”112 Significantly, none of these instances indicate that the Indian men in question viewed female labor as a potential source of egalitarian gender relations. Rather, the Indian men’s attitudes are indicative of the
degree to which masculinity and femininity were juxtaposed as cultural ideals. Obviously, the way femininity was employed in insults between men tells us little about the wide range of relationships between men and women and reveals even less about how women defined their identities or about the realities of gender relations in Indian villages. Nevertheless, male views of proper female comportment, understandings of the meaning of femininity, and perceptions of English marriage practices remain suggestive.

Conclusion

The process of defining masculinity in Indian society began in boyhood and continued throughout adulthood. While hereditary considerations appear important to marriages and to becoming a sachem, masculinity remained remarkably flexible. Men might gain a name and rank within Indian society that reflected proper comportment, physical accomplishment, and spiritual acumen. As scholars have often noted, colonization put Indian gender relations under tremendous stress. The epidemics, dislocation, and warfare that accompanied English settlement threatened many of the bases of Indian manhood. As David Silverman has recently stressed, increasing numbers of Indians in southern New England served the English as servants and seasonal wage laborers, activities that were outside of earlier understandings of Indian manhood. Noting these changes, he observes that “growing numbers of native males swallowed their pride and took up a hoe.” At the same time, numerous Indian men engaged in aspects of the colonial economy that were more amenable to older ways of defining Indian masculinity. To this end, Indian men served as whalemens and as mercenaries in English colonial armies. As these developments suggest, after over a half-century of English colonization, Indian masculinity remained in tension between the old and new, always open to redefinition in ways that appear novel at first glance, but that were often determined through familiar means.

This dynamic is evident in a number of episodes in seventeenth-century Indian history. On Martha’s Vineyard in the early 1640s, for example, the experience of the first Christian convert, Hiacoomes, suggests an interesting reconfiguration of Indian manhood. Prior to becoming Christian, he was the antithesis of Indian manly ideals: “His Descent was... mean, his Speech was slow, and his Countenance not very promising.” Perhaps due to his failure to excel as a man along more traditional lines, Hiacoomes showed openness to English culture and Christianity. By becoming the first Christian convert on the island, he co-opted English spiritual power and suggested a novel redefinition of Indian masculinity. Hia-
coomes “formerly... had been a harmless man amongst” his people, “not at all accounted of,” and noted most for his silence at Indian meetings—occasions that were most likely dominated by the oratory of high-status men. As a Christian man, this formerly low-status Indian used a new source of spiritual power to challenge the island sachems and powwows and came to enjoy a new status and novel role as a teacher among his people.  

While Hiacoomes’s transformation may not have been typical, his experience illustrates one possibility for redefining Indian manhood in colonial New England. His path, of course, was not the only one. Throughout King Philip’s War, for example, warriors drew on traditional sources of spiritual power with some measure of success. Indeed, considering the importance of spiritual power to warfare, the Indian practice of war during the conflict can be read, in part, as a radical reaffirmation of traditionalist masculinity. In the same conflict, praying Indian warriors serving the English forces used war paint evocative of Hobmomock and removed English clothing before combat. English commentators did not dwell on the cultural and religious significance of these acts. Nevertheless, that praying Indian men appealed to more traditional sources of spiritual power and employed older sartorial modes suggests that they quite comfortably blended older religious practices and ways of defining their manhood with the novelties of Christianity. Like their traditionalist neighbors, Christian Indian men found Hobmomock a powerful and necessary ally in war and key to defining their identities as warriors. Christian manitou might offer comfort back in Natick, Punkapoag, or other praying towns, but on the battlefield it was Hobmomock, not the English God, who appeared most potent. Of course, none of these instances is reducible solely to an explanation turning on the importance of masculinity, but these examples do suggest some of the complex ways that English colonization affected Indian masculinity.

Notes

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6 Roger Williams, *Key*, 93, 134–36; Christopher Levett, “A Voyage into New England, Begun in 1623, and Ended in 1624” (1628), in *Forerunners and Competitors of the Pilgrims and Puritans*, vol. 2, ed. Charles Herbert Levermore (Brooklyn, NY, 1912), 627. For a categorization and analysis of Indian speech acts, see Kathleen J. Bragdon, “‘Emphaticall Speech and Great Action’: An Analysis of Seventeenth-Century Native Speech Events Described in Early Sources,” *Man in the Northeast* 33 (1987): 106–71; and Bragdon, *Native People*, 173–74. Christopher Levett’s account concerns Indians from northern New England. As is consistent throughout this article, northern New England evidence—the accounts of Levett, John Josselyn, and John Gyles, for example—is used in support of accounts of Indians from the southern part of the region. Such evidence suggests some of the cultural consistencies existing among Indians in the northeast. In a recent reconsideration of ethnic identity and tribal boundaries in southern Maine, Emerson Baker argues that coastal Indians living between the Androscoggin River and the north shore of Massachusetts were culturally and politically tied agriculturists with some matrifocal tendencies; see Baker, “Indian Land Sales on the New England Frontier” (paper presented at the “Reinterpreting New England Indians and the Colonial Experience” conference held by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and Old Sturbridge Village, 21 April 2001). David Stewart-Smith examines the same group of Algonquian-speaking Indians and proposes designating them the Central Abenaki. In this designation, he also finds some cultural ties to the Indians under consideration here. For example, he argues that the Pawtucket sachem Nanepashemet’s wife was from a high-status Massachusetts family at Neponset. Following the Pawtucket sachem’s death in 1619, she led the band as


11 For example, Daniel Gookin and Roger Williams both noted the tension between the exercise of hereditary power and the consensus needed to succeed as a sachem; see Gookin, “Historical Collections,” 154; and Roger Williams, Key, 201–2. It is unclear the degree to which female sachemships opened traditionally male activities to women. Like their male counterparts, female sachems also depended on male advisors and warriors. Female sachems enjoyed a similar measure of power as that held by their male counterparts. For example, Benjamin Church described the Sakonnet sachem Awashonkes’s expert leadership of her warriors during King Philip’s War; see Church, “Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip’s War,” in So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip’s War, 1676–1677, ed. Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom (Middletown, CT, 1978), 399, 432–33. For more on these issues, see Robert S. Grumet, “Sunkquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in Women and Colonization, 43–62; Ann Plane, “Putting a Face on Colonization,” 140–65; Plane, Colonial Intimacies, 20–26; and Nash, “Abiding Frontier,” 174–80. Emerson W. Baker has suggested that female sachemships may have become more common in the seventeenth century as virgin soil epidemics and warfare left leadership positions traditionally held by men open to women; see Baker, “Indian Land Sales,” 5–6.

12 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 97; Mayhew, Brief Narrative, 6–9.

13 There was a range of English opinions regarding the structure and conduct of
Indian governance. Mathew Mayhew, at one extreme, described Indian leadership as analogous to monarchical rule, referring to “Kings,” “Queens,” and “Courts.” Daniel Gookin, among others, offered a more balanced view of Indian governance. While echoing Mayhew by claiming that “their government is generally monarchical,” he also observed that “sachems have not their men in such subjection, but that very frequently their men will leave them upon distaste or harsh dealing, and go and live under other sachems that can protect them: so that their principal endeavour to carry it obligingly and lovingly unto their people, lest they should desert them, and thereby their strength, power and tribute would be diminished”; Gookin, “Historical Collections,” 154. For a similar view, see Roger Williams, Key, 201–2.


15 Williams, Key, 201.

16 While it may have been possible for women to become shamans, in practice men usually had access to this important position in Indian society. There is some debate on this issue; see William S. Simmons, “Southern New England Shamanism: An Ethnographic Reconstruction,” in Papers of the Seventh Algonquian Conference, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa, 1976), 217–56; and Grumet, “Sunkquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen,” 53–54. For an example of Indian women’s acting as healers along with a male powwow, see Winslow, Good News, 28. There appears to have been a similar class of elite warriors in a number of southern New England Indian groups. Bragdon, for example, has suggested that the “valiant men” that Williams observed among the Narragansett may have been analogous to Pokanoket and Massachuset pineses. See also Bragdon, Native People, 143; and Williams, Key, 234.

17 Paul Robinson, Marc A. Kelley, and Patricia E. Rubertone, “Preliminary Biocultural Interpretations from a Seventeenth-Narragansett Indian Cemetery in Rhode Island,” in Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, A.D. 1000–1800, ed. William W. Fitzhugh (Washington, DC, 1985), 122–23. Michael S. Nassaney has made a related argument regarding tobacco use as a religiously important and gendered activity among the Narragansett in the seventeenth century. As the prolifer-
tation of European-manufactured pipes and the availability of more palatable tobacco varieties led to smoking by more and more women and children. Nassaney suggests that ritual tobacco use among Indian men may have undergone a similar renaissance as a response to changing gender practices. See Nassaney, “Archaeology and Oral Tradition,” 419–20, 423–25; and Nassaney and Volmar, “Lithic Artifacts.” For discussions of Indian cosmology, see Simmons, “Southern New England Shamanism,” 217–56; Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620–1984 (Hanover, NH, 1986), 37–64; Constance Crosby, “From Myth to History, or Why King Philip’s Ghost Walks Abroad,” in Recovery of Meaning, 183–209; Braden, Native People, 184–99; Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, 37–39; Nash, “Abiding Frontier,” 69–75; and Kupperman, Indians and English, 110–35, 177–92. For clarity, I use the terms employed by the Pokanoket. Other Indian groups used different terms for deities analogous to Keihtan and Hobbo-mock. For example, the Narragansett referred to the deities Cautantowwit and Abbomocho.

18 Williams, Key, 173, 189–94.
19 Mayhew, Brief Narrative, 12; Williams, Key, 190.
20 Winslow, Good Newes, 53–56.
21 Isaack de Raiser, “Isaack de Raiser to Samuel Bloomaert, c. 1628,” in Three Visitors to Early Plymouth, 78–79; Williams, Key, 115–16; Winslow, Good Newes, 55–56; Mayhew, Brief Narrative, 12. On the reciprocal nature of relations between the young and old in Indian society, see Morton, New English Canaan, 33.
22 Winslow, like many English observers, equated Hobomock, and the rest of the Indian pantheon, with the devil. Nevertheless, he managed to discuss Indian religion with more empathy in certain instances; see Winslow, Good Newes, 52–56.
23 Winslow, Good Newes, 42–43. Indian and English views of the link between the supernatural and success in warfare will be discussed more fully below.
24 Ibid., 55–56.
25 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 85; Williams, Key, 187.
27 There are two seventeenth-century Algonquian war clubs that have been apocryphally associated with King Philip, one held by the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland and another held by the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, Massachusetts. My discussion focuses on the club in the Fruitlands Museum collection, which recent research stresses was probably not owned by King Philip. On the history of the club held by the Fruitlands Museum, see Michael A. Volmar, “The History of ‘King Philip’s War Club,’” Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society 60 (1999): 25–29. Anthropomorphic clubs were fairly common in the Northeast; see Christen F. Feest, Native Arts of North America (New York, 1992 [1980]), 11, 179; and Sylvia S. Kasprycki,
“Ranging Foresters” and “Women-Like Men” 321


30 Williams, Key, 86. Also see William S. Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 172–73.

31 Citing Ezra Stiles’s 1761 account of Long Island Indian folklore, William Simmons argues that Wétucks and Maushop were analogous figures. He also notes that although Maushop stories ceased circulating among most Indian groups in New England after the seventeenth century, such legends continued to enjoy popularity among Christian Wampanoags into the nineteenth century. See Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 172–73.

32 William Baylies quoted in Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 175. For examples of the importance of tobacco to male comportment and ritual, see Wood, New England’s Prospect, 90; Williams, Key, 103, 127, 134, 150; and Winslow, Good News, 21–22, 58. For a discussion of ritual tobacco use and changing gender practices, see Nassaney, “Archaeology and Oral Tradition,” 412–31.


34 Morton, New England Canaan, 29–31; Wood, New England’s Prospect, 101. For an early-nineteenth-century example of shamanistic feats similar to Passaconaway’s actions, see Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 61. On

35 Williams, Key, 165. Williams was probably referring to the hummingbird, which appears similarly in other Indian oral traditions. William Wood encountered a sagamore wearing “with a humbird in is ear for a pendant” along with other components of elite adornment. See Robert E. Nichols Jr., Birds of Algonquin Legend (Ann Arbor, MI, 1995), 83–85; and William Wood, New England’s Prospect, 86.

36 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 105–6; see also Williams, Key, 149, 164.
37 Winslow, Good Newes, 58–59; Williams, Key, 96.
38 Williams, Key, 230.
39 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 92. Roger Williams described two types of Narragansett football. The first variety appears analogous to the game Wood described, while the second type was played at harvest time along a special “long house called [a] Quonmacmuck” and was the occasion of a mass redistribution of goods; Williams, Key, 230–31. David Underdown succinctly described the English football with which William Wood was probably familiar: “A more or less ritualized combat between communities, often represented by virtually the entire young male population of whole parishes, it was an appropriate expression of parochial loyalty against outsiders, in which the identity of the individual was submerged in that of the group”; Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660 (New York, 1991 [1985]), 75.

40 Williams, Key, 230; Wood, New England’s Prospect, 92.
41 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 104. Also see Williams, Key, 230.
42 To pipe had a number of meanings in seventeenth-century English. Considering the context of Wood’s comments, it is most likely that he used pipe contemptuously to denote the boy’s singing. In addition to this meaning, the Oxford English Dictionary cites a 1632 Milton passage that is also significant here: “His bigge manly voice, Turning againe toward childish trebble pipes, And whistles in his sound”; OED, 2nd ed., dictionary.oed.com.
43 Williams, Key, 234.
44 The women’s activities and the boy’s piping probably also had a sacred element: singing and dancing were often part of religious rituals. For examples of the religious significance of dancing and singing, see Williams, Key, 191–93; Gookin, “Historical Collections,” 153; Rowlandson, “Sovereignty and Goodness,” 63; and Gyles, “Memoirs of Odd Adventures,” 120.
45 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 104. Wood defined wampompeage or white wampum as “Indian money” and mowhackies or purple wampum as “Indian gold.” Williams noted that purple wampum was more valuable than white; see Wood, New England’s Prospect, 119–21; Williams, Key, 212; and William S. Simmons, Cauntantowwit’s House: An Indian Burial Ground on the Island of Co-nanicut in Narragansett Bay (Providence, RI, 1970), 55, 74.
46 On the spiritual significance of wampum, see Miller and Hamell, “New Perspective,” 311–28; Salisbury, Mantou and Providence, 147–52; Bragdon, Native People, 97–98; and Alfred Cave, The Pequot War (Amherst, MA, 1996), 49–68. For a discussion of the effect of the developing wampum trade on Indians in the Northeast, see Lynn Ceci, “Native Wampum as a Peripheral Resource
“Ranging Foresters” and “Women-Like Men”  


47 Levett, “Voyage,” 627. For more examples of Indian perceptions of the spiritual efficacy of furs, see Josselyn, New-Englands Rarities, 16; Mayhew, Brief Narrative, 15; and Rowlandson, “Sovereignty and Goodness,” 63.

48 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 92.

49 Williams, Key, 229–30.

50 Miller and Hamell, “New Perspective,” 316–20; Bragdon, Native People, 222.


52 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 103–4, 118.

53 Ibid., 104.


57 Williams, 189, 192, 224–28; Wood, New England’s Prospect, 106–7. On hunting techniques, see Cronon, Changes in the Land, 65–65; and Bragdon, Native People, 117–18.


59 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 78, 102–3. For similar views, see John Underhill, News from America; or, a New Experimentall Discoverie of New England: Containing, a True Relation of Their War-like Proceeding These Two Yeares Last Past, with a Figure of the Indian Fort or Palizado (London, 1638), EEBO, 40–41, eebo.chadwyck.com; and Williams, Key, 237. For more on the European
background of colonial warfare, see Karr, “Why Should You Be So Furious?” 881–89.
60 Underhill, Newes from America, 3–4.
61 Ibid., 14, 40–41. Williams also noted the importance of individualized contests in Indian warfare. In addition to being unable to comprehend such combat, Englishmen rarely exhibited the degree of accuracy that was essential to this type of battle. Indians not only proved superior archers but also easily made the transition to shooting guns with great accuracy. Williams also recalled witnessing an English military drill where “all the English had mist the mark” but an Indian present hit the target. See Williams, Key, 164, 237; and Malone, Skulking Way of War, 65–87. For a treatment of Anglo-Indian combat as the meeting of distinct military cultures, see Hirsch, “Collision of Military Cultures,” 1187–212.
62 Williams, Key, 237.
65 Morton, New English Canaan, 31–32.
67 John Mason, A Brief History of the Pequot: Especially of the Memorable Taking of Their Fort at Mistick in Connecticut in 1637 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1966 [1736]), 5; Rowlandson, “Sovereignty and Goodness,” 63–64. Benjamin Church described a similar Pocasset ritual during King Philip’s War; see Church, “Entertaining Passages,” 432–33. William Simmons has been foremost among scholars in stressing the centrality of shamanism to Indian warfare; see Simmons, “Southern New England Shamanism,” 231–34; and Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 51–53, 58–60.
70 For a classic statement on and example of using oral traditions as a complement to written sources in Indian history, see Gordon M. Day, “Oral Tradition as Complement,” in In Search of New England’s Native Past: Selected Essays by

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71 Unnamed Mohegan informant recorded by Frank Speck, quoted in Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes, 96.


73 Pointing to this significance, Roger Williams noted that the Narragansett words for “soul” and “sleep” were etymologically connected; Williams, Key, 191–94; Bragdon, Native People, 190–91.


75 Mason, Brief History, 20.

76 Underhill, Newes from America, 16; Williams, Key, 191.


78 Mather, Magnalia, 2:481. For more examples of Narragansett fear of the Pequot, see Philip Vincent, A True Relation of the Late Battell fought in New England, between the English, and the Salvages (London, 1637), EEBO, chadwyck.com; Mason, Brief History, 4; Hubbard, “Present State of New-England,” 2:23, 29. For discussions of Indian perceptions of Pequot spiritual potency and the role of shamanism in warfare that do not focus on the role of the supernatural in the formation of gender identities, see Simmons, “Southern New England Shamanism,” 231–34; and Kupperman, Indians and English, 191–92. On Indian naming practices, see Winslow, Good Newes, 58–59; and Williams, Key, 96.


80 The link between trophy-taking during battle and the supernatural is further evinced by Mary Rowlandson’s report of a ritual dance celebrating the Indian victory at Medfield during King Philip’s War, which culminated when “those had been upon the expedition were come up to the sagamore’s wig-wam. And then, oh, the hideous insulting and triumphing that there was over some Englishmen’s scalps they had taken (as their manner is) and brought with them!” See Rowlandson, “Sovereignty and Goodness,” 40–41. Trophy-taking was a regular part of combat in seventeenth-century New England. English soldiers rarely objected to such practices when they were directed at Indians, criminals, or other enemies. In fact, the display of defeated Indian warriors’ heads was a regular part of colonial warfare. The display of the sachem Wituwamat’s head at Plymouth after Miles Standish’s expedition against the Wessagusett in 1623 was but one example of a practice that continued through the century. Displays of heads were largely intended to terrify potentially truculent Indians and illustrate that the English were quite comfortable with such practices. While scalps had spiritual significance and were sometimes
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used in diplomatic exchanges among natives, the colonists proved the great innovators in trophy-taking. Connecticut officials paid Mohegans for Pequot heads in 1637, and scalp bounties were instituted during King Philip’s War. Using bounties to entice colonial soldiers and Indian mercenaries into service, colonial officials gave an economic gloss to a practice that had previously moved within spiritual and diplomatic economies of exchange. For examples of English trophy-taking, see Winslow, *Good News*, 45, and Church, “Entertaining Passages,” 450–52, 461. For a discussion of the origins of scalping and scalp bounties, see James Axtell and William C. Sturtevant, “The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (1980): 470.


89 Williams, *Key*, 205.

90 Unfortunately, Rasieres did not detail how the marriage was arranged; see Rasieres, “Issack de Rasieres to Samuel Bloomaert, c. 1628,” 79.


93 The total for Montowompate’s relative strength includes warriors subject to his older brother Wonohaquaham, also known as Sagamore John. Their villages endured a 1631 retaliatory Abenaki raid that killed seven men. An epidemic in 1633 killed both sachems and most of their followers; Thomas Dudley, “Thomas Dudley to the Lady Bridget, Countess of Lincoln, March 12 and 28, 1630/1,” in *Letters from New England*, 68–69; John Pond, “John Pond to William Pond, March 15, 1630/1,” in ibid., 64; Winthrop, *Journal*, 55, 105. Interestingly, these Indian groups appear to have had both matrilocal and patrilocal tendencies. Considering the epidemics, warfare, and loss of leadership that Pawtucket bands endured, the question of postmarital residency

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probably turned on pragmatic considerations: Montowompate’s and Wene-paweekein’s severely weakened villages probably could not afford to lose a sachem to matrilocal residency. On the patterns of patrilocal and matrilocal residency among the Pawtucket and Penacook, see Bragdon, Native People, 173–74; Baker, “Indian Land Sales,” 5–6; and Stewart-Smith, “Pennacook Indians and the New England Frontier,” 24, 30, 74–75, 84, 87.

Morton, New English Canaan, 32–33; Williams, Key, 235. For another example of this type of convoy, see Williams, “To Governor Henry Vane or Deputy Governor John Winthrop, 13 May 1637,” in Correspondence of Roger Williams, 1:78. Morton does not record a disagreement between Wenuhus and Montowompate. As Morton did not even to bother to record Wenuhus’s name in his account, she may well have motivated Passaconaway’s recalcitrance. Without other evidence it is difficult to determine all that was at play in the incident. Regardless, the reactions of both sachems to the dispute tell us a great deal about the importance of the rituals surrounding marriages and of such kin-alliances to male honor.

Morton, New English Canaan, 32–33.

Ibid., 33–34.

Ibid.


Wood, New England’s Prospect, 110.

Kamensky, “Talk Like a Man,” 22–47.

Wood, New England’s Prospect, 91; Williams, Key, 93, 97, 132, 135.

Mayhew, Brief Narrative, 10.

Wood, New England’s Prospect, 95; Winslow, Good Newes, 32–33.

Gyles, Memoirs of Odd Adventures, 123.

Williams, Key, 236. Bragdon has categorized and examined the relationship between Indian speech patterns and status. While insults are one of the categories she examines, she does not offer sustained analysis of the gendered nature of this type of speech; see Bragdon, “Emphaticall Speech and Great Action,” 106–7; and Bragdon, Native People, 173–74.

Winslow, Good Newes, 44. Underhill noted a number of boasts and insults during the Pequot War; see Underhill, News from America, 7, 9, 15–16; quotation on 16. Gardener also related similar instances in his account of the Pequot War; see Gardener, “Relation of the Pequot War,” 145–46. For a discussion of eighteenth-century Indian gender metaphors, including insults, see Nancy Shoemaker, “An Alliance between Men: Gender Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century American Indian Diplomacy East of the Mississippi,” Ethnohistory 46 (1999): 239–63. For an important discussion of gender and Anglo-Indian warfare that addresses some of these issues and focuses on English views of the body, see Chaplin, Subject Matter, 243–79.

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108 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 81. On the “wampum revolution” and the Pequot War, see Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, 147–52; and Cave, Pequot War, 49–68.

109 Other evidence makes similar comparisons between supposed Narragansett effeminacy and Pequot spiritual power, military strength, and manliness. According to Edward Johnson, Miantonimi noted that while the Narragansett “were more numerous, yet were they withall more effeminate, and lesse able to defend themselves from the sudden incursions of the Peaquot, should they fall out with them.” The account is unclear, however, as to whether Johnson or Miantonomi viewed the Narragansett as effeminate; Johnson, Wonder-Working Providence, 163. A letter from Richard Davenport to John Winthrop is similarly ambiguous but offers an interesting perspective on how Indian men may have viewed the relationship between the victors and the vanquished in battle. With Pequot strength destroyed by the combined English, Mohegan, and Narragansett forces, Davenport noted, “I perseue the Indians would bee glad to make women [he wrote “slaves” in the margin] of all the Pecott now, except the sachems and capt. and murtherers: but them they would kill”; Davenport, “Richard Davenport to John Winthrop,” 491.


111 Wood, New England’s Prospect, 92. The woman’s conduct was also problematic according to English standards; see David E. Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (New York, 1985), 116–56; and Kamensky, Governing the Tongue.


113 See n. 2.


117 The importance of Hobbomock to warfare and Indian manhood emerges in a number of interesting ways. The use of war paint, for instance, was indicative of a warrior’s connection to the supernatural. In an incident during King Philip’s War, Captain Amos, a Christian Indian serving with the colonial forces, “perceiving the Enemy had blacked their Faces, he also stooping down, pulled out some Blacking out of a pouch he carried with him, discoloured his Face therewith, and so making himself as like Hobamacko as any of his Enemies,” which allowed him to blend in with the enemy and prevail in battle. While serving as camouflage at a crucial point in a battle, Captain Amos’s use of war paint was also evocative of Hobbomock and had a significance that likely escaped English observers. He was not the only praying Indian warrior to find the power of Hobbomock more appealing and more useful than Christianity during King Philip’s War. In his account of the plight of the praying Indians during the war, Daniel Gookin reported an instance when “early in the morning, our forty Indians, having stripped themselves, and painted their faces like the enemy,” headed to battle. Earlier in the century, Williams noted that the Narragansett would don English-style clothing when interacting with the English but return to more traditional garb for other activities. See Hubbard, “Present State of New-England,” 175–76; Daniel Gookin, “An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677,” *Archaeologia Americana: Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society* 2 (1836), 511; and Williams, *Key*, 187.