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REINTERPRETING New Eng Indians AND THE
COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

Recovering Gendered Political Histories

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Local Struggles and Native Women's
Resistance in Colonial Southern
New England



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Introduction

IN THE OPENING SECTION of his *Historical Collections of the Indians of New England* (1674), missionary Daniel Gookin includes the following brief commentary on the creation stories of the indigenous people of New England:

I have discoursed and questioned about this matter with some of the most judicious of the Indians, but their answers are divers and fabulous. Some of the inland Indians say, that they came from such as inhabit the sea coasts. Others say, that there were two young squaws, or women, being at first either swimming or wading in the

water: The froth or foam of the water touched their bodies, from whence they became with child; and one of them brought forth a male; and the other, a female child; and then the two women died and left the earth: So their son and daughter were their first progenitors. Other fables and figments are among them touching this thing, which are not worthy to be inserted. These only may suffice to give a taste of their great ignorance touching their origin[s].¹

For Gookin, this account of indigenous origins must be a "fable and figment" because it has been related through oral tradition; indeed early in *Historical Collections*, Gookin discredits any accounts by natives of their own past, dismissing his Indian informants as "ignorant of letters and records of antiquity."² Thus, he concludes, "any true knowledge of their ancestors is utterly lost among them."³ Surely more "fabulous" to Gookin than oral tradition, however, were the central figures of the native women who, having mingled with the elements of the earth, became cultural creators: the forebears of a people and a way of life. Such an origin would not only be an affront to the masculine Christian god, but an intolerable cultural opposition to the seventeenth-century Puritan colonists, for whom the planting of the earth (with crops, colonies, and Christian souls)—and thus the proliferation of culture—was properly the work of men. Finally, what may have been as troubling for Gookin as the indigenous emphasis on the multifaceted reproductive powers of the wading women was the notion that native histories and identities had emerged from, and remained rooted in, the very landscape that English colonists had claimed as their own "homeland." Hence Gookin's opening section of *Historical Collections*, entitled "Several Conjectures on their Original [origins]," argues that Indians did not arise from the lands of America, but rather wandered there, having been either banished from their pre-

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sumed ancestral territory by the Christian god, or disowned by their "original" non-American ancestors.⁴

Implicit in Gookin's origins fable is the relationship between the processes by which native peoples of New England have been dispossessed of their land, and those by which indigenous women have been obscured from history. For Gookin's assessment of "Indian origins" points to the less than subtle way in which native women's pasts, like indigenous knowledges, were overwritten by a colonial discourse on Indianness, and thus obscured from the "American" landscape. To some extent, Euroamerican historiography of colonial New England, which has focused heavily on "culture contact"⁵ and the so-called "Indian Wars" of the seventeenth century, has sustained this discourse. For one thing, the emphasis on the seventeenth century has conveyed the notion that the only significant struggles waged by native people over land and political autonomy occurred on military battlefields (a predominantly male arena) and ended in 1676 with "King Philip's War."⁶ Indeed, as historian Colin Calloway has recently noted, "it seems that Indians figure in [American history] only when they offer violent resistance. Indians are the frontier; once their armed resistance is overcome, once the 'frontier' has passed them by, they no longer seem to count."⁷ Not only has the conventional focus on seventeenth-century warfare and early "contact" minimized the significance of those forms of native resistance that continued beyond the period of English military conquest; it has also tended to obscure the varied means by which colonialism—as a "cultural project of control"⁸—intruded into the lives of native women and men long after 1676, engaging them in struggles that tested the limits of colonial authority.

This essay attempts to understand the cultural knowledge and historical experiences that informed those struggles, investigating the ways in which notions of gender—and native women's resistance to

colonial domination—shaped the lives and historical possibilities of indigenous peoples in colonial southern New England. The essay is divided into two sections: in Part I, Trudie Richmond provides an overview of native women's political and cultural influence in their own communities, and examines the particular ways in which native women in southern New England resisted and adjusted to colonization and its varied attempts to silence or extinguish local indigenous identities. In Part II, Amy Den Ouden focuses on the relevance of gender in the long-running land dispute between Mohegans and the colony of Connecticut, highlighting the ways in which Mohegan resisters contested the colonially imposed notions of gender hierarchy and cultural legitimacy that had been employed to undermine the land rights of their reservation community.

By exploring the ways in which gender, and indigenous notions about the nature of women's power, shaped colonial power relations during and beyond the period of military conquest, we may better understand the complexity of the political struggles waged by native people in an unsettled colonial world. Equally important, we may gain further insight into the specific, local knowledges that continued to bind native women and men to their homelands and sustain their identities.

Part I:

Native Women's Resistance—A Path to Survival

I am a Shaghticoke woman from northwestern Connecticut and one of only five families living on the Shaghticoke Reservation. It has been my home for over 15 years. However, my life there has not been without struggle, sacrifice, and an intense determination to maintain the visibility of my people and protect our heritage. It has been the homeland of my ancestors for several thousand years. Yet, our continued presence honors the ancestors, emphasizes our commitment to our land, and states very clearly: "We are still here." Therefore, it is my intention to re-examine native women's roles

in colonial southern New England in order to address several key issues: (1) how native women were identified by others and how they identified themselves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; (2) how Christianity impacted the positions of Algonquian women; and (3) how native women's strategies of resistance ensured the survival of native identities and communities.

Native women have always been an important part of the cultural landscape; however, early colonial writers often made them seem invisible simply by ignoring them. At best, the authors failed to provide a great deal of vital information that would have added to our understanding of the diversity of women's roles in pre-colonial native societies. Women lived differently among distinct native nations, as well as within their own communities. They played key roles in all aspects of economic life: as sachems, shamans, healers, horticulturists, and traders. In colonial society, however, women were not held in high esteem. English women fell under the authority of their fathers or their husbands and had no rights to their children or their property. Nor were English women even meant to be "visible," and they could suffer harsh consequences if they were thought to have behaved inappropriately, particularly in public. It should come as no surprise, then, that native women's roles and influence in their own societies were obfuscated and disparaged by colonial chroniclers.

Although Roger Williams, in his *A Key into the Language of America* (1643), interpreted the term *sunksquaw* to mean "Queen or Sachem's wife," he failed to acknowledge that the women carrying the title wielded significant political authority within their own communities.⁹ However, there is considerable evidence of female political leadership among coastal Algonquian women of the seventeenth century, which indicates that female sachems, or *sunksquaws*, played an active role in decisions concerning matters most crucial to their communities, such as colonial land transactions. In addition, there were those among them who were unafraid to take on the role of warrior women

and lead armed resistance to safeguard their people. While notions of gender and power varied among the native societies of the northeast, in southern New England *sunksquaws* were figures of political influence and authority in their own right. Some inherited the office of sachem, sometimes succeeding a father, a brother, or even a husband; however, as anthropologist Robert Grumet observes, "this does not mean that every 'sunksquaw's' husband or brother was a leader. Many women sachems were married to men who had no pretension to leadership."¹⁰ Indeed, in colonial southern New England, *sunksquaws* remained leaders in their communities because they proved themselves capable and competent.

Weetamoo, a Pocasset *sunksquaw*, was already a woman of considerable power and authority when she married Alexander (Wamsutta), son of Sachem Massasoit. Weetamoo had inherited the right to rule upon the death of her father and had control of a great deal of land as well as a large quantity of surplus corn. As Grumet notes, she "served as a war chief commanding over 300 warriors" when she joined forces with King Philip (Metacombet) in the war of 1675.¹¹ Likewise, Quaiapan (also known as Matantuck¹²) was an influential *sunksquaw* of a Narragansett village. She was married to Mixanno, son of the Narragansett sachem Canonicus, and her brother, Ninigret, was a Niantic sachem. A strong supporter of Philip during the war of 1675, Quaiapan presided over "Queen's Fort," which lay at the heart of Narragansett ancestral territory.¹³ According to archaeologist Patricia Rubertone, during King Philip's War Queen's Fort had become "a formidable pocket of [Narragansett] resistance to colonial advancement," precisely because of Quaiapan's "steadfast refusal to sell land to English entrepreneurs and settlers."¹⁴ Quaiapan was killed in battle by English colonists in 1676.¹⁵

These are just a few of the women sachems whose power shaped native-Anglo relations in seventeenth-century southern New

England.¹⁶ They lived at a time when, within the hierarchy of local leadership, the position of sachem went to the most eligible and proficient, including women. This position, it must be remembered, was not one of dictatorial power; rather, it was won by those who exhibited wisdom and admirable traits of character, and who demonstrated the ability both to resolve disputes and to maintain and strengthen alliances.¹⁷ Since marriage and kinship ties were equated with political alliances, women in native communities—particularly those in the matrilineal societies of coastal southern New England—were always a visible political force. Thus *sauksquaws*, like male sachems, well understood the significance of the alliances that permeated their societies and bolstered the authority of local leadership.

Colonization worked to disrupt and undermine indigenous societies and intra-community relations in ways that directly impacted native women's lives. In his important examination of the diversity of women's roles in coastal Algonquian societies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Robert Grumet stresses the adaptive dimensions of the native response to European intrusion.¹⁸ As Grumet explains, coastal Algonquian peoples managed to maintain an independent existence in the midst of a pervasive and often hostile European presence. To a great extent, this was due to the deeply ingrained cultural importance of land, and to practices of cultural renewal and economic production that had always prominently included women. In the seventeenth century, women's power and status were based on their control over land and agricultural production. The cultivation of corn began in southern New England about 1000 A.D.,¹⁹ and by the sixteenth century, agriculture had become fundamental to indigenous subsistence, with corn, beans, and squash constituting the principal crops.²⁰ Women were responsible for planting and caring for agricultural fields, and because of their skills and knowledge as agriculturalists, large quantities of crops could be harvested and stored; women

thus provided the bulk of subsistence and became a dominant economic force in these agricultural societies.²¹ Corn surpluses, then, were an important source of women's power in their own communities, as well as an important commodity to be traded by some native women.²² No less important, the economic primacy of corn certainly reinforced women's cultural relationship to the land: because women were the primary agriculturalists in their communities, their intense use of land established and maintained their rights to it.

Nonetheless, seventeenth-century colonists often failed to grasp the larger political and economic significance of native women's activities. Roger Williams seemed to describe native women as drudges when he observed that they "constantly pound their corn" and "carry heavy loads."²³ Yet Williams's interpretation of what he saw reflected a profound cultural misunderstanding. Native women's daily labor embodied their true power: power over the reproduction of community life as well as the subsistence economy. Women cared for their planting fields as they cared for their children, and the product of this labor was exhibited in the persistence of native communities and identities in the colonial world. Thus while Williams appears to have ignored native women as leaders, perhaps without realizing it, he did describe the source of their economic power, noting that "the woman of the family will commonly raise 2, 3 or 4 heaps of 12, 15, or 20 bushells a heap, which they drie in round broad heaps and if she have help, of her children or friends, much more."²⁴

In redefining native women's roles and their increased value in food production and village stability in southern New England, archaeologist Russell Handsman evaluated the importance of women's mortars within the context of the story of Chanaheed, a mythic character whose gluttony represented the consumptive and wasteful forces of colonization. Chanaheed convinced a young Mohegan woman to come away and live with him; she agreed, and the

only possession she wished to take with her was her mortar and pestle for grinding corn. But when Chananeed began leaving her alone for longer and longer periods, she decided to leave him and return to her people. Significantly, she used her mortar and pestle to impede Chananeed's effort to recapture her, and thus she ensured her escape. As Handsman explains, the story suggests that the mortar and pestle—a native woman's tool of production—symbolizes her identity and signifies her resistance to colonialism.²⁵ The Mohegan woman's actions compel us to understand that women's subsistence activities were an articulation of important cultural beliefs, embodying what Handsman calls a language of resistance and preservation, one that was particularly significant in the context of a struggle between two societies that differed drastically in morals and beliefs.²⁶ Just as agriculture, and women's economic labor, had transformed native societies, so too could they serve to affirm and maintain social and cultural identities—to tell a story, in effect, about the enduring importance of native life ways.

Indigenous languages in southern New England also quite literally expressed the centrality of women's roles. Anthropologist Kathleen Bragdon has observed that "links between [Algonquian] people and their surroundings were marked in language use, which in turn reinforced expectations and understandings about the 'naturalness' of experience."²⁷ A look at Algonquian terms in southern New England that refer to the reproduction and source of life lends insight into the nature of women's roles and how they were interpreted within native communities. In the Algonquian dialect of southern New England, the word *obke* or *auke* means "the earth" and "that which produces or brings forth life."²⁸ Not coincidentally, the word for "mother" is *okasah*, from the same root as *obke*.²⁹ The words for "home" and "bride" come from the same root: *wetu* (*Wetauomoni*, for instance, means, "to take a mate" and "to marry").³⁰ The word *wetu* symbol-

izes more than living space: it designates that which shelters and strengthens the spiritual ties that embrace the earth. As they nurture and gather plants, and sustain their families and communities, women continually sustain the connection between their people and the spirit world. Like the earth, they are the progenitors of life. It was in this manner that native women in southern New England identified themselves, and were valued, in their own communities.

Colonialism, however, would have a destructive impact on gender relations and women's power in the indigenous societies of southern New England, particularly as it operated through the Christianizing mission. It is well documented that reducing the status of Indian women within their nations was a task that European colonizers were eager to undertake in order to weaken and destabilize indigenous societies. Systematic efforts to erase the cultural practices of indigenous people and displace them from their land base—the source of their economic livelihood as well as a spiritual foundation—were intended to ensure control over native populations.³¹ The missionary endeavor clearly served to undermine native women's status and power in many communities as the process of colonization ensued, and as indigenous people experienced "conversion," both voluntarily and involuntarily. With regard to the varied impact of Christianity on native women throughout northeastern North America, some scholars have argued that conditions in some indigenous societies, particularly those in which women did not enjoy equal status with men, facilitated missionaries' efforts to convert women.³² Kathleen Bragdon points out that, in certain cases, Christianity "reinforced a preexisting gender division and underscored the 'private' nature of women's activities."³³

By the early eighteenth century, native peoples in southern New England had endured colonization and Christianity for nearly 150 years. Many indigenous communities had been rendered landless,

while others were confined to reservations. Moreover, colonial authorities had utilized a particular cultural strategy to undermine the economic roles of native women and to separate them from their traditional positions of authority. As native ways of using the land were being forcibly undermined, many indigenous women and men were compelled to conform to colonial prescriptions for "proper" gender roles.³⁴ As historian Jean O'Brien has explained, English colonists sought to transform native men into agricultural laborers, while native women were to be trained in colonial "domestic" skills such as weaving and spinning;³⁵ "once the principal producers of the crucial agricultural element of their subsistence economies," native women in eighteenth-century New England "were expected to sever the vital connection they had to the soil as its principal cultivators and nurturers."³⁶

Missionaries continued to take a central role in imposing such changes on native women and their societies in the eighteenth century. In 1735, for example, John Sergeant, a Yale-educated minister, was appointed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England to work with the Housatonic Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts. After convincing some Mahicans of the Hudson River to join them at Stockbridge, Sergeant worked to create a "civilized" Christian community in a six-square-mile village, where he hoped to prepare his native converts for a changing world.³⁷ Sergeant was soon concerned to increase the number of converts, and, believing that Indian habits and culture were deeply ingrained from childhood, he thought he might achieve better results by creating boarding schools for native children, where he could work to force early conversions. Sergeant was devoted to "reforming" Indian girls as well as boys: boys were to cultivate the land, while girls were to be in charge of colonial domestic duties such as weaving and housekeeping.³⁸

In 1747 approximately 50 Mahican families lived in Stockbridge,

and 35 were members of the church. The imposition of colonial gender roles on these native families was not a task to be easily accomplished, however. Sergeant complained that native women spent a good deal of time gathering wood, planting, and weeding, and not enough time engaged in the activity of "housekeeping."³⁹ Further, while Sergeant observed that native children learned English quickly, he found indigenous people to be obstinately attached to their own ways, as he pointed out in a letter to George Drummond of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge: "The Indians in general are a people difficult to be reformed from their own foolish, barbarous and wicked customs." ⁴⁰

Despite continuing resistance, colonizers' efforts to Christianize and "civilize" indigenous people took their toll on native women and men in southern New England. In the mid-eighteenth century, the religious revival known as the "Great Awakening" prompted the conversion of considerable numbers of native people. By this time, the structures of native societies had been obscured, and in some cases destroyed, by the processes of colonization and the "civilizing" mission. In the face of increasing economic pressures and cultural domination by Euroamerican society, however, indigenous people found creative ways of resisting alienation from their homelands and the erasure of their cultural identities.

In certain contexts, women remained a powerful social and political presence in their communities and demonstrated their ability to become a significant force for resistance. These women acted with a wide range of motives and from a multitude of perspectives, as a careful assessment of native women's cultural and political activities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals. The specific cases addressed below provide further insight into the particular ways in which native women, as figures of power and progenitors of life, worked to ensure the survival of their communities.

Narragansett

Following King Philip's War, the native people of coastal southern New England experienced economic devastation, political disruption, and geographic relocation. Native communities, families, and individuals responded differently to the turmoil in their lives. The Narragansett people struggled to maintain traditional ways and to co-exist with their English "neighbors," while combating poverty, discrimination, and disease. Many Narragansett people, influenced by the Great Awakening and seeking spiritual support, decided to build their own church. In 1750 the Narragansett Indian Church was built, and the Narragansett people obtained their own Indian minister. Located on tribal lands in Charlestown, Rhode Island, the church became the center of Narragansett cultural as well as religious life; there they maintained church records and preserved Narragansett history through family records and the documentation of tribal activities. The Narragansett Church served as a meetinghouse where, very often, important decisions and survival strategies were developed. On three separate occasions the church burned down, but each time it was rebuilt. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century the Narragansett Church had become a crucial source of cultural identity and autonomy, helping Narragansetts to endure the attempt by the state of Rhode Island to "detribalize" them, and thus declare them "extinct," in 1880. While Euroamericans continued in their efforts to erase Narragansett identity, particularly through the racial categorization of Narragansett as "colored" or "black,"⁴¹ hardship and oppression served to strengthen the resolve of the Narragansett people to maintain traditional ways and remain within their homelands. In many instances it was Narragansett women who served as the culture bearers, passing down history and cultural knowledge, and thus maintaining historical continuity in the lives of Narragansett people.

Narragansett elders, like medicine woman and historian Ella Wilcox Sekatau, have been vital to the perpetuation of Narragansett oral tradition. For countless generations, such elders have been training the young people to listen carefully to Narragansett accounts of history in order to learn their people's unwritten laws and ceremonies. Today, it is the knowledge and teachings of Ella Sekatau that serve to sustain oral tradition and cultural identity among her people.

Mohegan

During the seventeenth century, Mohegans, particularly their sachem Uncas, were allies with English colonizers. In an effort to maintain a friendly relationship with colonial authorities, Uncas transferred a great deal of land to colonists. Ultimately, like other native communities who had survived the impact of European diseases and colonial warfare in the seventeenth century, the Mohegan people were confined to an ever-diminishing reservation and a life of poverty and discrimination. In 1827, an aspiring missionary from Norwich, Connecticut, Sarah Huntington, felt compelled to "do something for the sadly neglected Mohegans, to improve their moral condition and build a suitable place of worship."⁴² Huntington subsequently organized the "Society for the Improvement of the Mohegan Indians," and, as a result, the Mohegan Church was established and dedicated in 1831. As was the case for Narragansetts, the Mohegan Church came to represent the core of Mohegan people's cultural heritage, and Mohegan women played a central role in establishing and maintaining the cultural significance of the church. The green in front of the church became the spiritual center of life at Mohegan, for that was where the annual Wigwam Festival, sponsored by the Mohegan Ladies' Sewing Society, was held each summer.

An event that continued for over 100 years, its purpose was to raise

funds to support the church; but the Wigwam Festival also contributed to the cultural survival of the Mohegan people. The gendered division of labor in the preparations for this event revealed both the changes and continuities in Mohegan cultural life. Each year Mohegan men worked together to erect a wigwam-like arbor, constructed from white birch saplings. Men also brought forth their families' wooden mortars, and some helped to pound corn, parch it, and make the traditional *yokeag*. "Pounding the yokeag was an activity performed by each generation of Mohegans. It connected them with those who had gone before."⁴³ The women also made several native dishes for the event, including succotash, clam chowder, and oyster stew, as well as a variety of pies and cakes. In addition, Mohegan women sold the splint baskets, beadwork, and woodcarvings they had made. As Mohegan tribal historian Melissa Fawcett has explained, the Wigwam Festival was an opportunity to "learn to be Muhukiniuk," which means "one with the spirit of Mohegans."⁴⁴ The planning and preparation for this event not only emphasized the importance of complementary gender roles, but also celebrated the role of elders in cultural preservation, providing them with an opportunity to share the oral traditions and the history of the people. The Mohegan Ladies' Sewing Society, which worked to keep this event at the center of Mohegan community life, met throughout the year, and also provided an opportunity for mothers, daughters, and granddaughters to share family stories and to preserve their cultural beliefs.⁴⁵ Today, Mohegan women are considering restoring the Ladies' Sewing Society.

Schaghticoke

Colonists often justified the taking of indigenous lands in southern New England by denying that they were in fact native homelands, describing and devaluing them as a "vast wilderness." Likewise,

local histories of the towns in northwestern Connecticut reduced the existence of the native people of that region to a few short paragraphs. For instance, in his *History of the Indians of Connecticut* (1832), nineteenth-century Connecticut historian John W. De Forest wrote that the state, "now inhabited by a populous, civilized and Christian community, was once entirely possessed by a few barbarous tribes of a race which seems to be steadily fading from existence."⁴⁶ As De Forest and other Euroamerican historians of the era have suggested, if it were not for the presence of the "civilized" population, the land would have remained a "desolate wilderness." The map of Connecticut in 1630 that De Forest included with his text depicts the northwestern region of the state as an empty space, ignoring and omitting the indigenous communities—including Weantinock, Schaghticoke, Mahican, and Pootatuck—whose ancestors had lived along the Housatonic River for thousands of years. In effect, the map offers a justification for the taking and "settling" of the land.

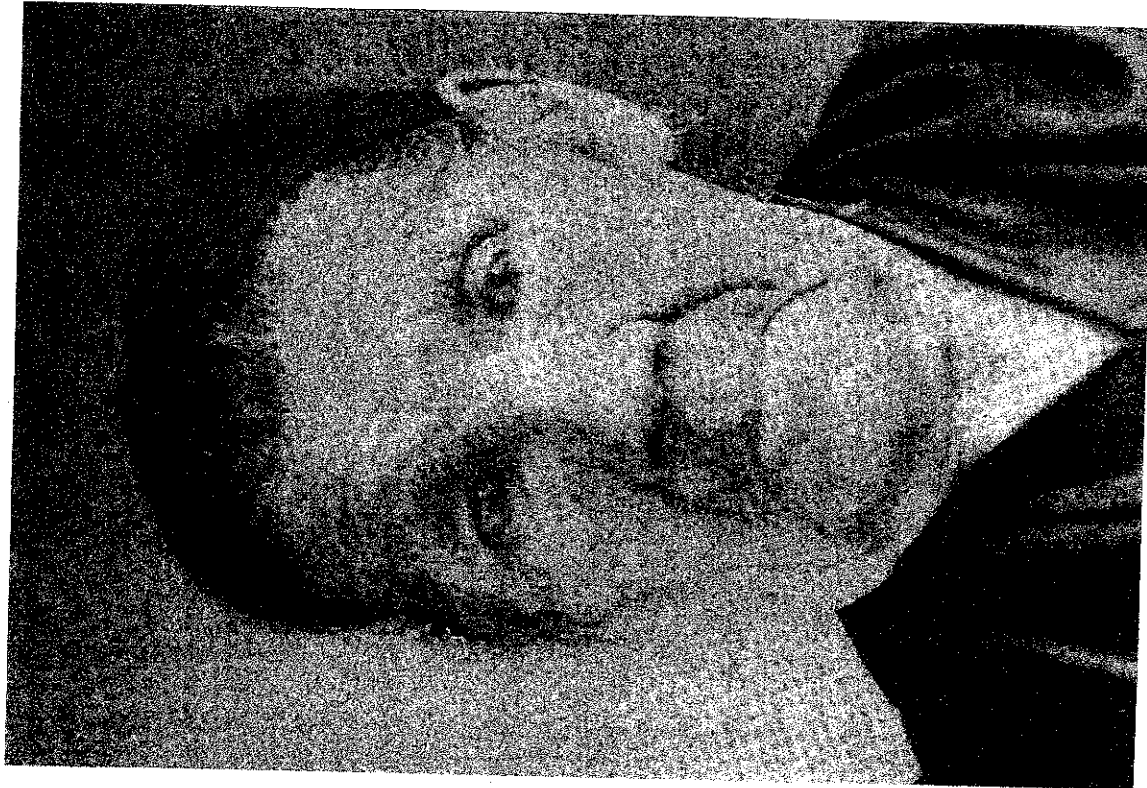
The Housatonic River was a source of great power and majesty to the native peoples who inhabited that region of what is now western Connecticut. For centuries, many native communities built their villages on or near the riverbanks. The Schaghticoke and Paugussetts of contemporary Connecticut are among those whose ancestors lived along the Housatonic. These communities had a true partnership with the land, and their cycle of subsistence was regulated by generations of spiritual tradition. However, that belief system was threatened repeatedly in the eighteenth century by the imposition of Euroamerican technology, the pressure of Christianity, and disease. The encroachments of colonists from New England to the east and New York to the west contributed to the weakening of native social and political systems in the region. Thus native women and men were faced with difficult choices for survival: accommodate or boldly resist.⁴⁷

It was not until the early eighteenth century that the northwestern corner of Connecticut was invaded by colonizers. The town of Kent was established in 1739, and within a decade a reservation had been created for the Schaghticoke people. Their leader, Gideon Mauwee, approached the town officials for support, requesting a school and teachers for the education of Schaghticoke children, but he was refused. Subsequently, when the Schaghticoke community was visited by Moravian missionaries from Germany, Mauwee invited them to stay. Unlike the English, the Moravians sought to accommodate the native lifestyle, and lived and worked among Schaghticoke people without conflict. They remained for nearly twenty years, and even built a stone mission as a site for conversions, baptisms, and worship. Because the Moravians kept extensive daily dairies, which included descriptions of Schaghticoke activities as well as examples of resistance, they preserved important fragments of Schaghticoke cultural history.

During the period of the Moravian presence, Schaghticoke life flourished, and the Moravians encouraged them to continue some of their traditions, such as the production of carved bowls and spoons, canoes, baskets, and braided corn husk mats, the sale of which might allow Schaghticoke to adjust better to the colonial economy. Whether converts or not, Schaghticoke people worked to preserve elements of their culture. Moravian records indicate that expressions of their cultural traditions and values persisted in the Schaghticoke community. Periodically, Schaghticoke converts requested permission to be absent from evening services because they were participating in traditional sweathouse activities. To Schaghticoke people, such activities had both physical and spiritual value, not only by curing illness but by purifying the spirit as well. Moravians urged Schaghticoke to alter their customary way of harvesting materials for their crafts, attempting to convince Schaghticoke that if the women remained at

home engaged solely in craft-making while the men went out onto the land to collect the resources, they could more efficiently produce their crafts for the marketplace. The Schaghticoke people stubbornly refused; they were unwilling to change the communal nature of men's and women's labor as producers of crafts.⁴⁸

These glimpses into natives' lives during and beyond the colonial period reveal that in many important ways, women's traditional political and economic roles continued to shape the histories of indigenous peoples in southern New England long after the arrival of colonists, and despite the varied forms of cultural and economic domination that infused their lives in the seventeenth century and beyond. As a final tribute to the histories of native women in southern New England, I would like to introduce two Schaghticoke women who engaged in resistance—both passively and aggressively—and who never denied their identities or their connection to their homeland, even in the face of discrimination and prejudice. The first, Eunice Mauwee, was born in 1759, the daughter of Joseph Mauwee and the granddaughter of Gideon Mauwee, a Schaghticoke sachem and the last traditional chief among his people. Although Eunice was born a few years after the Moravians left, her family had adopted many Euroamerican ways. Eunice recounted one of the most revealing events of her life in a story of her girlhood when she was no more than eight or nine years old. One day, when her grandfather and several of his friends came to visit her father, their "wild" appearance frightened her: they had dressed in the "Indian" manner—perhaps in animal skins and adorned with tattooed designs on their bodies and faces. The presence of these "real" Indians caused Eunice to hide in the bushes; they were undoubtedly perceived as "menacing" by this little girl, albeit an Indian herself, who was wearing a cloth dress and high-buttoned shoes. Having been born into a Christianized society, she had been separated from the natural and spiritual world of her ancestors.



Eunice Marwee

But Eunice did not grow to be a woman detached from her cultural heritage. She lived to be over 100 years old, and is considered by Schaghticoke people today to be the "grandmother of us all," the strength of her people. Eunice survived most of her life as a basket maker, traveling about the countryside selling her crafts. Other native women of the time shared her experience; indeed, by the mid-nineteenth century the principal basket makers in southern New England were women. When she was 85 years old, she decided to join the Congregational Church and to stay at home and share the old stories. Too old to travel, she passed down tribal history through her storytelling, as she had been taught. When she died, the headlines of her obituary misleadingly read, "The Last of the Pequots, an elder basket maker." Finally, she had become "visible" in Euroamerican society, as if her longevity were now her only claim to fame. What Euroamericans would have been unlikely to see, however, was that Eunice was a sociocultural authority among her people.⁴⁹ She was neither a leader nor a political force, but her basket making was symbolic of the transfer, and the power, of cultural knowledge and Schaghticoke identity. Eunice's baskets represent the "internal qualities of culture"⁵⁰ and are preserved and exhibited in museums and homes throughout the country. Eunice was a *real* Indian.

Julia (Cotsure) Cogswell was another influential Schaghticoke woman of the nineteenth century. Born in 1860, not long after Eunice died, Julia never knew her great-grandmother. But she experienced the same racism and identity struggles as her relatives. She also lived in a time when even families with restricted incomes and little money for luxuries believed that they might best preserve who they were through photography. Moreover, having one's picture taken seemed to instill a sense of pride in one's identity. Like many Schaghticoke, Julia was motivated by such sentiments when, dressed in her best Euroamerican attire, she went to a local photographer. The photographer, however,



Julia Cogswell

i really wish they had printed both photos. "this was not the way she identified herself."

decided that he wanted to take a second photograph (seen here). He draped a blanket with an Indian design around her shoulders, had her take down her hair, and then placed a toy bow and arrow in her hands. The expression on her face is one of sadness and remorse. She was a proud, gentle woman, who never denied who she was, but this was not the way she identified herself.⁵¹ This was not how she captured her own "Indianness." Yet, in her eyes a look of passive resistance is preserved.

Part II.

Gender, Culture, and Power in the Mohegan Land Struggle, 1704–1738

The overview of native women's histories in Part I emphasizes the fact that cultural processes and political struggles are often propelled by the ostensibly mundane activities of daily life: subsistence activities, for instance, and the routinized interactions between women and men as they worked to sustain their communities in an increasingly oppressive colonial world. Such forms of "passive" resistance were crucial to the reproduction of native identities, and to the continuity of native histories. But there were also dramatic moments of overt resistance to dispossession and cultural domination in the post-"Indian War" period in southern New England. Remarkably, one of the most significant instances of such resistance is found in the eighteenth-century history of a native people who have long been cast as a major colonial ally. Indeed, under the leadership of Uncas, Mohegan men participated in the English massacre of Pequots at Mystic in 1637; and it is undoubtedly that historical moment that has preserved Mohegans' name in popular (Euroamerican) accounts of colonial history. However, just as it cannot be assumed that indigenous people's historical possibilities were elided by military conquest, neither can Mohegan history during the colonial period be reduced to that of a "colonial ally."⁵² In fact, throughout most of the eight-

teenth century, Mohegans were engaged in an intense and complex legal dispute with the colony of Connecticut over rights to their reserved land.⁵³

At a crucial moment during this dispute, Mohegans engaged in an act of protest against the Connecticut government that emphasized their own ideas about gender, political authority, and the enduring importance of their cultural connection to their ancestral lands. On September 10, 1736, Mohegans held a ceremony on their reservation in New London to name Anne, daughter of deceased Mohegan sachem Cesar, as *sunkwau*.⁵⁴ in opposition to Ben Uncas II,⁵⁵ a Mohegan leader who had complied with the Connecticut government and failed to defend Mohegans' land rights.⁵⁶ This ceremony, characterized by Connecticut Governor Joseph Talcott as an attempt by rebellious Mohegans to "set up a queen or imposter,"⁵⁷ marked an important moment in the history of Mohegans' relationship with the colony of Connecticut. For the leadership ceremony was not only an assertion of Mohegans' land rights, but an expression of their resistance to the Connecticut government's efforts to manipulate their cultural beliefs and political affairs.

In order to begin to unravel the significance of gender in the context of the Mohegan land struggle, one must first acknowledge that the women and men who comprised reservation communities⁵⁸ in eighteenth-century Connecticut were possessed of a political and historical consciousness, and were fully engaged in the colonial world precisely because their remaining lands were perpetually threatened by encroachers. In the aftermath of King Philip's War, native histories in Connecticut were shaped by local struggles against dispossession, and by reservation communities' efforts to retain some measure of cultural and political autonomy. Natives' petitions to the Connecticut government, through which they sought redress against encroachers, preserve important details of these struggles, revealing the devastat-

ing impact of colonial encroachment on reservation economies while also expressing the cultural and historical importance of reservation lands to the women and men who sought to protect them. Mohegans, like the neighboring Niantic, Eastern Pequot, and Mashantucket Pequot reservation communities in New London County, contended with the intensifying pressure of an expanding Angloamerican population and its demand for land in the early eighteenth century.⁵⁹ In an October 1703 petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, Mohegan leaders Owaneco, Ben Uncas I, and Mahomet I detailed the extent to which colonial land hunger had undermined Mohegans' subsistence economy, and called upon the colonial government to acknowledge the history of agreements between Mohegan leaders and the colony regarding Mohegans' land rights. "As to our Boundaries," they reminded colonial legislators:

they have been established by youre fathers & ours. Your records declare the same and what was by them Done we acknowledged and the articles made by them we own . . . [but] you have Suffered your people to Doe us wrong in settling upon our Lands notwithstanding our complaints from time to time.⁶⁰

The petition then explained that Mohegans had been threatened "to be Killed" by townspeople of Colchester

whoe are settled upon our Land without our consent . . . and they have burnt our Hunting house that we Dare not goe to hunting upon our own Land for feare of being Killed by them and we forced to defend ourselves. [And] the Governr. [Hitz-John Windrop] did in a time of snow Last winter turne our women & children off[] our planting fields Claiming it for his own and the people of

N[ew] London did take away great part of our planting Land far above their bounds which have been known between them & us for many years and Last May your court granted to New London & Coughester all the Rest of our Lands [o] that we have noe Land either to plant or hunt upon. we have [claimed] nothing but what your own Records Declare and now we heare by the scouts that are out that the English up Conecticot River threaten to take our Scalps and the pequots and make money of them according to boston Law.⁶¹

The Mohegan reservation, referred to by the Connecticut government as the "sequestered land" and the "Mohegan fields,"⁶² was known by colonial officials to be the place where the majority of Mohegan people "dwell and plant."⁶³ At the time of this petition, the reservation encompassed a thirty-two-square-mile tract of land between the towns of New London and Norwich. In May of 1703, however, the Connecticut General Assembly's "Act for the enlargement of New London township" incorporated Mohegans' sequestered land within the town's boundaries. Neither this act nor the 1704 New London patent that followed it acknowledged any specific boundaries for the Mohegan reservation,⁶⁴ and thus they offered implicit incentive for encroachment.

Despite the dire conditions of life described in the 1703 petition, Mohegans, like other reservation communities in early eighteenth-century Connecticut, persisted in their efforts to preserve their remaining lands. As the colonial records indicate, reservation communities' struggles against encroachment at times had a considerable influence on legislative debates over land rights, and in some instances caused the Connecticut government to be at odds with the English crown as well as with its own Angloamerican constituency. In their

protests, reservation communities not only asserted local understandings of land rights and historical continuity, but also strategically employed colonial law to question the legality of particular acts of dispossession that Connecticut officials and colonial encroachers sought to legitimize.⁶⁵

Reservation communities' resistance to dispossession elicited specific, culturally salient efforts on the part of the Connecticut government to "quiet" natives' complaints against encroachment, as it was commonly phrased by colonial officials. While the colony's fundamental reservation law, established in 1680, held that lands reserved for a particular native community were to "remain to them and their heirs for ever,"⁶⁶ the Connecticut government initiated practices that served to justify and perpetuate colonial encroachment on reservation lands. By the early eighteenth century, the Connecticut General Assembly's legislative decisions regarding natives' rights to reservation land began to reflect an effort to evade the 1680 law, and to interpose, instead, colonial assessments of the cultural viability of reservation populations. Thus, in its response to natives' complaints against encroachment, colonial legislators began to appoint investigatory committees that tended to scrutinize reservation communities rather than the actions of colonial encroachers. An overview of both the General Assembly's orders to such committees and the committees' own reports indicates that their investigations into native complaints against encroachment were primarily concerned with assessing the size of the reservation population in question (and particularly the number of resident adult men in the community), and the reservation communities' "improvements" of their land according to colonial cultural standards. Disparaging reservation communities on cultural grounds—depicting them, for instance, as poor caretakers of the land, or as imminently "disappearing" from the landscape due to an insufficient number of men visible among them—became an effective

tive means of circumventing the 1680 reservation law and legitimating ongoing processes of dispossession.⁶⁷

Thus, in the context of native-Anglo struggles over rights to reservation land in early eighteenth-century Connecticut, it was not simply territorial boundaries that were contested, but particular notions about the cultural and political legitimacy of reservation populations. The Connecticut government's handling of the Mohegan land dispute serves as a crucial example of this newly significant strategy of colonial rule in the post-"Indian War" period. At the onset of the Mohegan land dispute, events foretold that colonial ideas about gender hierarchy were to figure prominently in the Connecticut government's efforts to justify its appropriation of Mohegan reserved land. In 1704, when Mohegan sachem Owaneco petitioned the English Crown in protest of the colony's appropriation of Mohegan lands in New London and Colchester, Queen Anne responded by establishing a commission to investigate and resolve the dispute.⁶⁸ The commission met in Stonington, Connecticut, in 1705, and ultimately ruled in favor of the Mohegans' complaint, determining that the colony had unjustly "granted away" their planting and hunting lands and ordering that those lands be restored to Mohegans.⁶⁹ Connecticut refused to acknowledge the 1705 decision, however, charging that the imperial commission lacked the authority to decide the case.⁷⁰ In its appeal to the Crown, the Connecticut government also attacked the 1705 decision on the grounds that Mohegans were not worthy of such consideration: as described by Connecticut's attorney, Sir Henry Ashurst, Mohegans were "*inconsiderable Indians*" who had "*but very few men*."⁷¹ Hence a characterization of the Mohegan people as a politically and culturally unviable entity was introduced into the legal debate over Mohegan land rights. As the dispute wore on, gendered disparagements of Mohegan identity and cultural life would become increasingly

important to the Connecticut government's efforts to silence Mohegan resisters and avoid enforcing the 1680 reservation law.

The colony's failure to comply with the 1705 decision did not serve to quash Mohegan resistance, however, nor did it deflect imperial scrutiny. As Connecticut's Governor Saltonstall reported to his Assembly in 1713, the Queen intended to look again into the "Affair of the Indian Lands."⁷² Not surprisingly, subsequent colonial legislation concerning reservation populations and their land rights, passed in 1717, reflected the Connecticut government's interest in tightening its control over natives' lives and lands, this time under the aegis of the Christianizing mission. The 1717 act, referred to as "measures for Bringing the Indians in this colony to the knowledge of the Gospel," was directed primarily at Mohegans.⁷³ Ostensibly intended to "civilize" indigenous communities in Connecticut more effectively, the act specified that native populations were to be confined to "settlements in convenient places, in villages after the English manner" and identified the town of New London as the appropriate place to begin the endeavor, since it was there that the largest native community in the colony—that is, the Mohegan reservation community—resided.⁷⁴

Perhaps the most significant provision of the act was its directive concerning the precise nature of the proposed native "settlements": they were to comprise "suitable portions" of land assigned to individual native families, the rights to which were to "*descend from the father to his children*, the more to encourage them to apply themselves to Husbandry."⁷⁵ Seventeenth-century Indian law in Connecticut had not made such a pointed attempt to impose gendered prescriptions regarding land tenure on reservation populations,⁷⁶ and this particular stipulation suggests that nearly a century of colonial domination in southern New England had not eradicated native women's role as the primary agriculturalists in their communities. Given that dispos-

session, the undermining of indigenous subsistence economies, and service in the imperial border wars compelled many native men in southern New England to leave their communities in the eighteenth century, it is likely that women, or matrilineal kin groups, controlled agricultural plots on reservation lands and sustained community life.⁷⁷

In attempting to impose a patriarchal and privatized system of land tenure on reservation communities via the 1717 "measures," colonial legislators sought not only to sever native women's cultural and economic connection to their lands, but also to deny the communal nature of landholding among reservation populations (and at the Mohegan reservation in particular). Conversely, the colony's 1680 reservation law asserted that rights to reservation land were to be held collectively, by a "parcel of Indians . . . and their heirs for ever."⁷⁸ Thus, the 1717 act may well have been intended to legislatively terminate both the Mohegan reservation and the reservation community itself. Obscuring the vital presence of native women on reservation land would have been a necessary first step in legitimating such an effort.⁷⁹

A committee of colonial officials sent to implement the 1717 legislation met with immediate resistance from Mohegans, who had refused to acquiesce to encroachment on their reserved planting land. The General Assembly responded in 1718 by appointing another committee to investigate Mohegans' continuing complaints,⁸⁰ but, as was often the case in native-Anglo land disputes in eighteenth-century Connecticut, the appointment of an investigatory committee by no means ensured that native complainants would receive a fair hearing or "just" treatment in the colonial legal system, as Mohegans learned all too well. Indeed Connecticut officials who set upon the task of "quieting" such disputes were likely to be more concerned with protecting the interests of other colonial landholders than with preserv-

ing native rights to reservation land.⁸¹ When Mohegan leaders Cesar and Ben Uncas I met directly with Connecticut Governor Gurdon Saltonstall in October 1720, they may have hoped for a better governmental response to the ongoing problem of encroachment on their sequestered land. In this instance, they provided Saltonstall with the names of particular colonists who had pressured Mohegan leaders to sell portions of their land.⁸² More important, according to Saltonstall's own report on the meeting, Cesar and Ben Uncas expressed their concern for the land rights of future generations of Mohegans, having "declared, that the Land was not theirs to dispose of, but it was to descend to their Children."⁸³

Despite these protests, by 1721 the Connecticut General Assembly reduced the Mohegan reservation to approximately five thousand acres, or one-fourth of its original size.⁸⁴ It had been Mohegans' government-appointed "guardians," colonists James Wadsworth and John Hall, who recommended that the Assembly so reduce the sequestered land as a means of resolving the dispute between Mohegans and colonial encroachers.⁸⁵ Through that act, Wadsworth and Hall secured Mohegan lands for a number of New London residents, among them six men who had been named as encroachers by Cesar and Ben Uncas I in their meeting with Governor Saltonstall in the previous year.⁸⁶ But this legislation had broader implications for the colony's Indian policy as well, since it introduced the politically expedient notion of imminent Indian "extinction" into the official legal discourse on native land rights. As it was phrased in the General Assembly's 1721 order, Mohegans' diminished reservation "shall forever belong to the Mohegan Indians . . . so long as there shall be any of the Mohegan Indians found, or known alive: and when the whole nation, or stock of said Indians are extinct . . . [the reservation] shall for ever belong to the town of New London."⁸⁷ Hence it was the idea of Mohegans' inevitable disappearance from the landscape that, in effect, trumped the 1680 reservation

law and signaled the emergence of a form of colonial surveillance intended to assess the presumed "degeneration" of those "stocks" of land-holding Indians. Indeed, it might be argued that this act foreshadowed the "racialization" of Euroamerican discourse on Indianness, and its emphasis on evaluating the legitimacy of native identities and native rights in terms of the notion of Indian "racial purity" (i.e., "blood quantum").⁸⁸

This legislative action must also be viewed on another level, however, one which acknowledges that Mohegan resistance to dispossession had indeed made a significant impact on the shapers of colonial Indian policy. For it is certain that, in this instance, colonial officials and encroachers alike had sought to silence Mohegans' very pointed assertions of their land rights, which had served in 1704 to capture the ear of the Crown and had not yet been muted by the impoverished, if not desperate, conditions of reservation life. And thus, in this extreme reduction of Mohegans' reserved planting land, and in legislators' overtly stated prediction of impending doom for the Mohegan body politic, the 1721 action superceded the 1717 "civilizing measures" as an attempt by colonial officials to bring both the dispute over Mohegan lands, and *Mohegans themselves*, to an end. Nonetheless, as their leaders made clear to Governor Saltonstall in October 1720, Mohegans did not envision themselves as a vanishing people. Fifteen years after the 1721 action—and despite the hardships that act had wrought for the reservation community—Mohegans managed to persist; moreover, they had not succumbed to the authority of the Connecticut government. By January 1736, after Connecticut Governor Joseph Talcott learned that Mohegan leader Mahomet II, grandson of Owaneco, was making his way to London to present a second petition to the Crown,⁸⁹ Mohegans' legal case against the colony was reignited. Since Mohegans' complaints had been heard by external authorities whose interest in the matter might

serve to be troubling for the Connecticut government (for example, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, as well as the Crown),⁹⁰ the controversy over Mohegan land rights had become something of a public relations problem for Connecticut, one that had focused attention on the legality of the colonial government's actions during the course of this dispute. Such attention was clearly warranted: the colony had disregarded the 1705 decision of the imperial commission as well as its own 1680 law. A November 1735 letter from the Reverend Benjamin Colman of Boston, a Commissioner for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, to Eliphalet Adams of New London, the Society's "agent with the Indians in the eastern part of Connecticut,"⁹¹ suggested that it was the legitimacy of the Connecticut government that was now at stake in the dispute. Indeed, Colman warned Adams that Mohegans' complaint "will fall heavy at Last upon your colony, for the Injury done the Indians in their Laws." Colman continued:

I have as high a Resentment of such Injustice as any one, and Againe am as loath to apply home [to England] in any complaint for a Relief to the poor Natives, always friendly and faithfull to us, never to be Enough Acknowledged by us. We have complained to Your Gov[ernment] in Vaine. I know nothing more threatening to your charter than a wrong of this Nature, well proved, but what heart or hand can I willingly have in a piece of Justice which may bring on you so heavy a Revenge. What would it be for Your Province to do the Indians Right, and bear the loss among them [?]⁹²

Colman had raised the thorny issue that had been addressed by the 1705 commission: "to do the Indians Right" would require the restoration of their land. Such an argument against Connecticut's

position in the matter, from an external authority, required a response, but it was to be a response that diverted attention from the central question posed in Colman's letter.

In 1736, Governor Talcott initiated a campaign to discredit Mahomet II and those Mohegan resisters who supported him. In a January 1736 letter to Massachusetts Governor Jonathan Belcher, Talcott sought support for Connecticut's cause in the matter, and argued that Mahomet II was not the legitimate sachem of the Mohegan people, but was rather "a tool" of Captain John Mason, a longtime friend and advisor of Mohegans whom Talcott had cast as the land-hungry instigator of the dispute.⁹³ But Talcott intended to do more than simply promote the Connecticut government's own position in the controversy to influential outsiders; he was also concerned with more effectively and directly controlling the Mohegan reservation community itself, and that required the cultivation of a Mohegan leader who would do the colony's bidding. Thus Talcott worked to legitimize the authority of Ben Uncas II, who had inherited his leadership position from his father but had been rejected, as Talcott himself was to learn, by his own community.⁹⁴ Although Talcott had assured Belcher that it was not Mahomet II, but Ben Uncas II who was "now in the full possession of the [Mohegan] Government, and has the hearts of his people,"⁹⁵ in February Talcott employed Captain Benajah Bushnell of Norwich to interrogate Mohegans on the reservation for the purpose of obtaining evidence that might be used to discredit Mahomet II, and to prove that Ben Uncas II was Mohegans' rightful sachem.⁹⁶

In his February 1736 report to Governor Talcott, Bushnell explained that he could acquire from Mohegans "no Evidences of there Discarding of Mahamit the 2."⁹⁷ In fact, Bushnell noted that the Mohegans he encountered during his investigation had not readily submitted to his inquiries, and that some of those he had ques-

tioned about Mahomet II simply refused to talk to him, telling Bushnell "that they did not care to Declare or say anything about it, without the People were all together."⁹⁸ In the face of colonial assumptions about impending Mohegan extinction, Mohegan women and men thus proclaimed their political autonomy and the legitimacy of Mohegan community life. Nevertheless, Bushnell's report went on to conclude that Mohegans' disappearance was imminent, and depicted the reservation community as existing in a state of cultural and political decay. As Belcher argued, this alone rendered Mohegans unworthy of the Crown's concern:

I have Examined Several of the Indians, Concerning the number of all the ffamilies that belong to the whole Tribe of them . . . and Cant make more than 28 of them, & Several of them are non Residents, and seldom Live there. And there are several Widdows that keepe house, which they Reckoned as ffamilies. And they are not only a few but miserable pore, that I think if our Sovereign Lord the King knew their Circumstances well he would hardly put himself much out of his waite to obtain an alliance with them.⁹⁹

Bushnell's contempt for Mohegans is obvious enough, and his assessment of the Mohegan reservation community indicates how the ostensibly mundane practice of *counting Indians* became an effective silencing maneuver, central to both the justification of dispossession and the obfuscation of natives' own ideas about what sustained community life. Among Mohegans, households headed by women—even destitute widows—were "reckoned as families." Indeed, their presence may well have become increasingly important during the course of the land dispute, as Mohegans contended with encroachers and the effects of dispossession on their means of subsistence. Talcott

reported later in 1736 that the Mohegan reservation community included "47 men 12 and up, and 48 women 12 and up."¹⁰⁰ Thus Mohegan women would have been extremely important to community life not only economically, as food producers, and as bearers and nurturers of children, but as a presence representing Mohegans' enduring connection to their homeland. Subsequent events of 1736 suggested that Bushnell's report obfuscated the cultural and political relevance of Mohegan women to the reservation community's struggle to preserve their collective land rights.

Despite Bushnell's failed investigation, by April of 1736 Governor Talcott had in hand two documents, both written in the colonial legal parlance of the time, which he would offer as evidence of Mohegans' own denial of Mahomet's legitimacy as a political leader; thus discrediting Mahomet's petition to the Crown as well. One of the documents, entitled "Declaration of Ben Uncas, Sachem of Mohegan," proclaimed the alliance between Ben Uncas II and the Connecticut government, and denounced previous complaints against the colony.¹⁰¹ The other, a purported "Declaration of 9 of the Prime Mohegan Indians," was intended to defame Mahomet II by asserting that his political illegitimacy was rooted in an unsavory parentage. The document claimed not only that Mahomet I had been "banished" by his father, Owaneco, for his "Cruelty and barbarity," but that Mahomet I had, likewise, "banished" his own son, Mahomet II, because he was not born of "a Woman of the Royall Blood," but rather was the "issue" of "a Concubine of a Mean Extract."¹⁰² This parentage, the document alleged, rendered Mahomet II "a Stranger & an Alien" to Mohegans.¹⁰³

This gendered construction of Mahomet's political and cultural "illegitimacy" brings into relief a crucial aspect of the Mohegan leadership ceremony that took place several months later. During this ceremony Mohegans not only contested the authority of Ben Uncas

II and his alliance with the colonial government, but also challenged colonial beliefs regarding gender hierarchy and political authority that had been made explicit both in the 1717 "civilizing" measures and in Governor Talcott's subsequent campaign against Mahomet II. Indeed, colonizers' distinctly patriarchal and class-based notions about land rights and political leadership were embodied in the opposing phrases "*Woman of the Royal Blood*" and "*Concubine of a Mean Extract*." This colonial construction of Mohegan political, cultural, and indeed biological "legitimacy" was intended to disqualify Mahomet II as a leader as well as a Mohegan; but it also disparaged indigenous women, particularly those who were impoverished, in a far more insidious fashion than had Belcher's contemptuous characterization of widow-headed households in the Mohegan community. Indeed, this effort to root legitimate Mohegan identity—and thus Mohegan land rights—quite literally in the wombs of women of (colonially concocted) Mohegan "Royal Blood" hinted at the possibility of far more Mohegans being disqualified, or "unrecognized," via the government's own calculations of the presence of such "blood" in the reservation community.

Mohegans' September 1736 leadership ceremony offered a dramatic counterpoint to the gendered tactics of colonial domination that the reservation community had endured. The sole account of the 1736 ceremony was given by colonists Jabez Crocker and Joseph Tracy Jr., of Norwich, who had witnessed the event. According to their testimony, on September 10 of that year "a very great number of Mohegan Indians" gathered "on the Indian land at Mohegan [i.e., the Mohegan reservation in New London]," for "a meeting which they call a black dance."¹⁰⁴ During the ceremony, Mohegans proclaimed their support for Mahomet II and his complaint against the colony, and "entirely denied Ben Uncas [II] to be their Sachem." Most important, Mohegans explained to Crocker and Tracy that,

"the one principal cause of their meeting or dance was to establish Anne the daughter of Caesar . . . to be their ruler until Mahomet returned."¹⁰⁵ Crocker and Tracy's account thus indicates that Mohegans had not yet learned that Mahomet II had died of smallpox in England in the previous month. Governor Talcott had been informed of the event, however, by the colony's agent in London, who expressed in a letter to Talcott his hope that with Mahomet's death "an end is put to the Affair."¹⁰⁶

The September 1736 ceremony indicated to the Connecticut government that Mahomet's death alone would *not* end the affair, for there was another leader, Anne, to whom Mohegan resisters had already looked. As Governor Talcott's response to the ceremony suggests, Anne's leadership presented a considerable political threat to the colony by confronting Connecticut officials with the likelihood that Mohegans' legal case would go forward.¹⁰⁷ Talcott subsequently instructed missionary Jonathan Barber to warn Mohegans not to "set up a queen or imposter," for if they did, the colonial government "would protect only Ben [i.e., Ben Uncas II] and his family: with those that adhered to him."¹⁰⁸ As Barber later testified, this was no idle threat to Mohegans at the time, since after the September leadership ceremony, a timely and perhaps colonially contrived rumor had circulated that the so-called "Eastward Indians" (that is, Abenakis) were planning to attack Mohegans. According to Barber, the rumor "caused the [Mohegans] a very great fear, even so great that they did many of them begin a fort for their defence."¹⁰⁹

Connecticut officials also sought a more direct, and surely more "traditional," means of silencing Anne: an arranged marriage. As colonist Samuel Avery later explained, "some time in the Year 1737 it was Proposed and Thought Convenient that Ben Uncas, Junr. [son of Ben Uncas II], who was then an Indented Apprentice . . . in the Province of Massachusetts, should be Sent for . . . And Married unto

Sachem Cesar[s] daughter."¹¹⁰ In his petition to the Connecticut General Assembly requesting reimbursement for his services, Avery stated that he had retrieved the son of Ben Uncas II as ordered, and according to colonial accounts, Anne's forced marriage did take place.¹¹¹

Thus Anne's sachemship appears to have been effectively undermined by the Connecticut government; subsequently, her name virtually disappeared from the historical record. Nonetheless, Mohegans continued to denounce Ben Uncas II, explaining in a May 1737 petition to the General Assembly that he had assisted encroachers whose livestock damaged Mohegan crops, and that he "utterly Denies to ask us any Council in any of [our] affairs but Does as he is Directed by them whome we think to be our Trespassers."¹¹² By this point, however, colonial officials were intent upon ignoring Mohegans' protests against the actions of Ben Uncas II. When a second imperial commission sat in Norwich, Connecticut, in May 1738 to review the Mohegan case, the majority of the commissioners, who were from Rhode Island, declared Ben Uncas II to be Mohegans' legitimate sachem and overturned the 1705 decision.¹¹³ In July 1738, Governor Talcott assured the colony's agent in London, Francis Wilks, that the "proper Moheags" continued to support their rightful "King," Ben Uncas II.¹¹⁴ From the Connecticut government's perspective, then, only those Mohegans who did its bidding—which included Ben Uncas II and his few followers—were to be acknowledged as "proper," that is *legitimate*, Mohegans. Although Mohegan resisters appealed the 1738 decision, by 1773 the Crown ruled on behalf of the colony and the legal case was brought to a close.¹¹⁵

The final legal outcome of the dispute notwithstanding, the 1736 leadership ceremony was a crucial moment in Mohegans' dispute with the Connecticut government, for it signaled the enduring importance of land, and local knowledge, to a community shaped by a history of

struggle. In one sense, the event seems to have been a means of commemorating the previous three decades of Mohegans' resistance to dispossession, for indeed Anne's name recalled the English queen who had established the first commission to hear Mohegans' complaint against the colony in 1705. Thus Anne's leadership may have suggested a compelling irony, invoking imperial authority to remind the Connecticut government of its failure to acknowledge the 1705 decision.

At the same time, however, the 1736 ceremony was a forceful expression of Mohegans' own beliefs and practices regarding political authority and land rights. It asserted that Mohegan leadership was a local matter, its legitimacy rooted in the reservation community—and in Mohegan land—rather than in the halls of the colonial government. And if Mohegans did in fact refer to the event as a "black dance," that name too may have had a timely political and cultural significance: evoking as it does the colonial notion of Indian "savagery" as a diabolic, anti-Christian force, such a designation suggests that the ceremony expressed Mohegans' rejection of the multiple cultural trappings of "civilization," not simply the patriarchal strictures of colonial rule. Given Governor Talcott's attempt to undermine Mohegan leadership and deny Mahomet's Mohegan identity, Mohegan resisters may have intended for the "black dance" to emphasize Mohegans' *otherness*, to articulate Mohegan identity in terms of a *gendered* opposition that defied both colonial understanding and governmental control.

Finally, it is also important to note the significance of the season during which the ceremony was held. Since late summer was the time of harvesting green corn, this gathering at Mohegan on September 10 may well have coincided with the Green Corn Ceremony, a celebration that highlighted the importance of women's role as agriculturalists.¹¹⁶ Thus the naming of Anne as *sunksquaw* may have been a means of reaf-

firming the importance of women within the reservation community—not only as cultivators of corn, but as reproducers of community life and purveyors of Mohegans' cultural ties to their reserved land.

The September 1736 ceremony thus embodied a complex critique of colonial power, challenging colonizers' patriarchal notions about land rights and the legitimacy of reservation communities, and affirming the local knowledge and practices that bound members of the Mohegan reservation community to each other and to their homeland.

Conclusion

Gendered beliefs and practices played a powerful role in natives' strategies of resistance and accommodation in colonial southern New England. By unraveling the significance of gender in indigenous struggles for land and political autonomy, we may come to better understand the complexity of native women's lives during and beyond the period of military conquest. Moreover, examining the particular ways in which ideas about gender shaped relations of power in the post-"Indian War" colonial world, we may release from obscurity a broader field of historical actors, among them those native women and men who may not have been sanctioned by colonial officials as "legitimate" leaders, or whose voices and experiences may not have been acknowledged by Euroamerican historiography, but whose actions nonetheless sustained their communities, and their histories.

Notes



1. Daniel Gookin, *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* ([1674]; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1972), 6-7.
2. Gookin, *Historical Collections*, 6.
3. Gookin, *Historical Collections*, 6.
4. Gookin, *Historical Collections*, 4-6.

5. The trend in the historiography of colonial New England to cast conquest and colonialism as seventeenth-century phenomena consisting of "culture contact" or "cultural encounter" tends to obscure the complexities of colonial domination as a multifaceted system of control, in the context of which the production of knowledge about culture, and indeed about history itself, were (and remain) implicated in relations of power. As anthropologist Bernard Cohn has explained, the colonial situation "is not to be viewed as 'impact', nor as 'culture contact', nor is it to be viewed through a methodology that seeks to sort what is introduced from what is indigenous." Rather, the colonial situation must be understood as a context in which both colonizers and indigenous peoples "were constantly involved in representing to each other what they were doing," and in which forms of knowledge and representations of the past thus shaped, and were informed by, relations of domination. Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 44-45. See also Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Nicholas B. Dirks, "Introduction: Colonialism and Culture," in *Colonialism and Culture*, ed.

Recovering Gendered Political Histories

Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler, "Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule," *American Ethnologist* 16 (4) (1989): 609-21; and Peter Pels, "The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 163-83.

6. The historiography of colonial southern New England has long indicated that King Philip's War marked the end of significant political resistance for the Native peoples. Historian Harold Clayton Bradshaw referred to it as "the last great stand of the Indians"; more recently, historian Harold Selesky called it "the last Indian challenge." Similarly, ethnohistorian Laurie Weinstein has argued that as a result of the 1675 war "New England Indians [were] defeated in their efforts to protect their lands from further colonial encroachment," and that "there were no more barriers to colonial settlement of New England." Harold Clayton Bradshaw, *The Indians of Connecticut: The Effect of English Colonization and of Missionary Activity on Indian Life in Connecticut* (Deep River, Conn.: The New Era Press, 1935), 52; Harold Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Laurie Lee Weinstein, "Indian vs. Colonist: Competition for Land in 17th Century Plymouth Colony" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Methodist University, 1983), v. However, a close look at the land struggles of reservation communities in eighteenth-century Connecticut (see below) reveals that such depictions do not reflect the way in which Native people themselves understood their past, or envisioned their historical possibilities.
7. Colin G. Calloway, "Introduction: Surviving the Dark Ages," in *After King Philip's War: Presence and Persistence in Indian New England*, ed. Colin G. Calloway (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997), 4.
8. Nicholas B. Dirks, "Introduction: Colonialism and Culture," 3. In the past several decades, feminist ethnohistory and other critical studies in colonialism have contributed much to our understanding of the varied cultural mechanisms by which colonial powers imposed and

maintained authority. Among the most important for this essay has been the work of anthropologists Irene Silverblatt and Ann Laura Stoler. See Irene Silverblatt, "Interpreting Women in States: New Feminist Ethnohistories," in *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Ann Laura Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1) (1989): 134-61.

9. Robert S. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women During the 17th and 18th Centuries," in *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York: Praeger, 1980), 49.
10. See Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen," 49.
11. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen," 51.
12. See Patricia E. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings: An Archaeology of Roger Williams and the Narragansett Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 122.

13. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings*, 122.

14. Rubertone, *Grave Undertakings*, 122-23.

15. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen," 51.

16. For other relevant discussions of the role of sunksquaws in native-Anglo political struggles in seventeenth-century southern New England, see for instance Anne Marie Plane, "Putting a Face on Colonization: Factionalism and Gender Politics in the Life History of Awashunks, the 'Squaw Sachem' of Saconet," in *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 140-65; and John Menta, "Shaumpishuh,

'Squaw Sachem' of the Quinipiac Indians," *Artifacts* 16 (3-4) (1988): 32-37.

17. In John Trumbull's "Natick Dictionary," the word sachem (*sokhom*) is translated as "he has the mastery" and "he leads." James Hammond Trumbull, "Natick Dictionary," *Bureau of American Ethnology Reports, Bulletin* 25 (1903).

18. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen."

19. See Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 69.

20. Peter Nabokov and Dean Snow note that by the time of Columbus's invasion, "techniques for growing and storing vegetables had been developing in the Northeast for four or five centuries." Peter Nabokov and Dean Snow, "Farmers of the Woodlands," in *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus*, ed. Alvin M. Josephy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 126. On indigenous women as the primary agriculturalists in New England, see Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 69-81.

21. A number of scholars have offered important insights into the nature of native women's labor and economic power in northeastern North America. Among the most important to the present discussion are: Joy Bilharz, "First Among Equals? The Changing Status of Seneca Women," in *Women and Power in Native North America*, ed. Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Joan M. Jensen, "Native American Women and Agriculture: A Seneca Case Study," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Russell G. Handsman, "Algonkian Wigwams: An Invisible Presence, Political Spaces," *Artifacts* 17 (4) (1989).

22. Grumet, "Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen."

23. Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* ([1643]; repr. Detroit:

Wayne State University Press, 1973), 121.

24. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 171.
25. Russell G. Handsman, "Chanameed and A Mohegan Woman's Mortars," *Artifacts* 16 (3-4) (1988): 11-27.
26. Handsman, "Chanameed," 25.
27. Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 135. Mohegan Tribal Historian Melissa Fawcett has elaborated on this notion. In her recent book, *Medicine Trail: The Life and Lessons of Gladys Tantaquidgeon*, Fawcett records the teachings of Mohegan elder and medicine woman Gladys Tantaquidgeon on a variety of matters, including the way in which language expresses particular aspects of the leadership roles of men and women. According to Tantaquidgeon, "in the Mohegan language, the spirit of rocks is acknowledged in the names for our leaders. A male leader is called sachem, which means rock man and a woman leader is referred to as sunksquaw, which means rock woman. It has been passed down that the rocks are the bones of Mother Earth." Melissa Fawcett, *Medicine Trail: The Life and Lessons of Gladys Tantaquidgeon* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 21.
28. Trumbull, "Natick Dictionary," 102.
29. Trumbull, "Natick Dictionary," 104.
30. Trumbull, "Natick Dictionary," 187.
31. See M. Annette James Guerro, "Civil Rights versus Sovereignty: Native American Women in Life and Land Struggles," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997).
32. Kathleen Bragdon provides an excellent overview of the literature on

- the impact of the Christianizing mission on native women and gender relations in colonial New England. Kathleen Bragdon, "Gender as a Social Category in Native Southern New England," *Ethnohistory* 43 (4) (1996): 573-92.
33. Bragdon, "Gender as a Social Category," 575.
34. See Jean M. O'Brien, "Divorced from the Land: Resistance and Survival of Indian Women in Eighteenth-Century New England," in Calloway, ed., *After King Philip's War*.
35. O'Brien, "Divorced from the Land," 145-49.
36. O'Brien, "Divorced from the Land," 149.
37. Russel G. Handsman and Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Confronting Colonialism: The Mahican and Schaghticoke Peoples and Us," in *Making Alternative Histories*, ed. Thomas C. Patterson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1995).
38. Electa Jones, *Stockbridge, Past and Present: Records of an Old Mission Station* (Springfield: Samuel Bowles and Co., 1894), 70.
39. See Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).
40. Shirley Dunn, *The Mohican World, 1680-1750* (Fleischmanns, N.Y. Purple Mountain Press, 2000), 130.
41. Ruth Wallis Herndon and Narragansett Tribal Historian Ella Wilcox Sekatau have examined the impact of imposed racial categories on Narragansett history and identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Wilcox Sekatau, "The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era," *Ethnohistory* 44 (3) (1997): 433-62.
42. Henry Baker, *History of Montville, Connecticut, Formerly the North Parish of*

New London, from 1640–1896 (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Company, 1896), 65.

43. Fawcett, *Medicine Trail*, 48.

44. Fawcett, *Medicine Trail*, 54.

45. Documents and personal papers relating to the history of the Mohegan Ladies' Sewing Society are housed at the Mohegan Archives, Mohegan Tribal Office, Uncasville, Connecticut.

46. John W. De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut from the Earliest Known Period to 1850* ([1852]; repr. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1964), 1.

47. For further discussion of the history of Schaghticoke resistance, see Trudie Lamb Richmond, "A Native Perspective of History: The Schaghticoke Nation, Resistance and Survival," in *Enduring Traditions: The Native People of New England*, ed. Laurie Weinstein (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1994).

48. For a more detailed discussion, see Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Spirituality and Survival in Schaghticoke Basketmaking," in *A Key into the Language of Woodlark Baskets*, ed. Ann McMullen and Russell G. Handsman (Washington, Conn.: American Indian Archaeological Institute, 1987).

49. The notion of native women as sociocultural authorities in their communities was introduced by Mohegan Tribal Historian Melissa Fawcett. Melissa Fawcett, "Sociocultural Authority: The Mohegan Case," in *Rooted Like the Ash Trees*, ed. Richard Carlson (Naugatuck, Conn.: Eagle Wing Press, 1987), 52–53.

50. See Fawcett, "Sociocultural Authority," 53.

51. In *Partial Recall: Photographs of Native Americans*, Lucy Lippard discusses

the impact of photographic images on Native American identities, revealing how photography has shaped Euroamerican society's idea of Indianness while it has also obscured native histories and identities through both romanticism and dehumanization. Julia had clearly experienced the dehumanizing aspect of portrait photography. Lucy R. Lippard, "Introduction," in *Partial Recall*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: The New Press, 1992), 13–45; see also James C. Faris, "Photographing the Navajo: Scanning Abuse," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 20 (3) (1996): 65–81.

52. The idea that Mohegans' history during the colonial period can be reduced solely to that of colonial "ally" reflects the persistent power of colonial discourse, and of colonial divide-and-rule policies, most dramatically evinced in colonists' cultivation of relationships with specific native leaders for the purpose of carrying out the 1637 massacre and thereby acquiring Pequots' much-coveted lands. This particular notion has also shaped the way native people in Connecticut view their histories today. Anthropologist Jack Campisi has observed that it is not uncommon for Mashantucket Pequots, when talking about the colonial past, to remark that Pequots and Mohegans "had not had much contact" since Mohegans "join[ed] the English in the massacres and enslavement" of Pequots in 1637. Jack Campisi, "The Emergence of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, 1637–1975," in *The Pequots of Southern New England: The Rise and Fall of an American Indian Nation*, ed. Laurence Hauptman and James Wherry (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 117. Contrary to the claims of colonial discourse, however, seventeenth-century divide-and-rule tactics did not result in a permanent disaffection and disconnection between native communities that were embroiled, and opposed, in seventeenth-century colonial warfare. As Amy Den Ouden discusses elsewhere, Pequots and Niantics—whose reservations, like Mohegans, were besieged by colonial encroachers—participated in Mohegan leadership ceremonies in the eighteenth century and supported Mohegans in their legal dispute with the colony over rights to their reservation land. As Den Ouden points out, such alliances between reservation communities suggest that kin ties, local cultural

beliefs, and the common historical experience of struggle against dispossession, continued to bind native peoples to each other, despite the political dissension wrought by military conquest in the seventeenth century. Amy E. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest: Land, Culture, and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Histories of the Native Peoples of Connecticut" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2001).

53. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 182-263.

54. There is evidence that *sunkwaw* was the term Mohegans used to describe Anne's position of leadership. Testifying before the imperial commission of 1743, which was charged with reviewing the Mohegan case and the proceedings of the previous commission in 1738, colonist Samuel Leffingwell of Norwich testified that he "heard, when Mahomet [II] was in England, that some of the Indians were about to set up Anne, the daughter of Caesar, to be Sunkew Squaw." *Governor and Company of Connecticut, and Mohegan Indians, by Their Guardians. Certified Copy of Book of Proceedings Before Commissioners of Review, 1743* [hereafter *Book of Proceedings*] (London: W. and J. Richardson, 1769), 204.

55. Cesar was the son of Owaneco and grandson to Uncas; Ben Uncas II was the son of "Major" Ben Uncas (Ben Uncas I, the brother of Owaneco) and also grandson to Uncas. Mahomet II (son of Mahomet I and nephew of Cesar) and Anne were great-grandchildren of Uncas. See "Uncas Genealogy" in *The Talcott Papers: Correspondence and Documents during Joseph Talcott's Governorship, 1724-1741*, vol. 2 (1737-1741), *Collations of the Connecticut Historical Society*, vol. 5 (Hartford: The Society, 1896).

56. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 233-54.

57. *Book of Proceedings*, 237.

58. My use of the term *community* here refers to native women and men who share a land base and economic resources, and who are bound by kin ties and a common historical experience. In using this term, I do

not intend to imply that, by the eighteenth century, there were no longer native sociopolitical entities that can be termed *nations*. Rather, what I mean to specify is that reservation communities did (and do) not necessarily comprise the entirety of a native nation or people. The harsh economic realities of the eighteenth century required that native men, for instance, often had to seek work away from their communities as wage laborers (in the whaling industry, for example), and that parents might have had to send their children out as indentured servants in Euroamerican households.

All four of these reservation communities were located within New London County and were engaged in struggles to protect their remaining lands in the eighteenth century. Each petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly several times during the first half of the eighteenth century to seek redress against colonial encroachers. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 264-67; 327-34. The combined population of Mohegans (351), Mashantucket Pequots (321), Eastern Pequots (218), and Niantics (163) equaled approximately 3/4 of the total indigenous population (1,400-1,600 individuals) as estimated by Gov. Joseph Talcott in 1725. Thus New London County, a main hub of colonial society in Connecticut, contained the largest concentrated population of indigenous people in the colony at the time. *Talcott Papers*, 2: 397-402. In 1730, Talcott reported that the total native population in the colony was "about 1600, of both sexes and all ages," and that the total Euroamerican population in Connecticut was 38,000, with a significant increase having occurred between 1720 and 1730. *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut* [hereafter CPR], ed. J. H.UMBULL and C. J. Hoadley (Hartford: Press of Case, Lockwood & Brauer, 1850-1890), 7:580-84.

60. *Indian Papers*, Connecticut State Archives, Papers and Correspondence of the General Assembly, 1st ser., doc. 52.

61. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 52.

62. See *Book of Proceedings*, v; *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 122.

63. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 122.
64. *Book of Proceedings*, 27-28; 177-81.
65. For a detailed discussion of the cultural and political facets of these struggles over reservation land in eighteenth-century Connecticut, see Den Ouden, "Against Conquest."
66. CPR, 3:56-57.
67. See Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," chaps. 6-7.
68. Owaneco's 1704 petition initiated the legal case known as *Mohegan Indians, by their Guardians v. The Governor and Company of Connecticut*. Legal scholar Mark D. Walters provides an excellent overview of the legal case, and of the views held by colony and Crown with regard to the legal sovereignty, but his article does not include an analysis of the role of Mohegan resisters themselves as important political actors during the course of the dispute. Mark D. Walters, "Mohegan Indians v. Connecticut (1705-1773) and the Legal Status of Aboriginal Customary Laws and Government in British North America," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 33 (4) (1995): 785-829. Other discussions of the legal case, none of which address the significance of Mohegan resistance, include: E. Edwards Beardsley, "The Mohegan Land Controversy," *Papers of the New Haven Historical Society* 3 (1882): 205-25; David W. Conroy, "The Defense of Indian Land Rights: William Bollen and the Mohegan Case in 1743," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 103, pt. 2 (1994); and Joseph Henry Smith, *Appeals to the Privy Council from the American Plantations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950). As argued here, Mohegans' political strategies and cultural knowledge were a driving force of the legal case and offered an important critique of colonial authority and colonial claims to native land.
69. *Book of Proceedings*, 28.
70. *Book of Proceedings*, 33. See also Walters, "Mohegan Indians v. Connecticut,"

- 804-II. Another important argument in the colony's appeal, and one that continued to be articulated throughout the course of the legal case, was that all Mohegan lands were "conquest lands," having been acquired, it was claimed, via the "Pequot War" of 1637, during which "the Pequots and all their Adherents and Subjects, whereof all the Mohegans were a part, were Conquered." Likewise, the Mohegan sachem Uncas, who had been allied with colonial leaders against Pequots in 1637, was rendered a "subordinate" sachem in this argument, one who had only "pretended to the Proprietary of a small Territory Called Mohegin." *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 61.
71. *Book of Proceedings*, 153-55.
72. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 79.
73. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 87; CPR, 6:31-32.
74. CPR, 6:31-2.
75. CPR, 6:32.
76. The 1680 reservation law, for instance, included no stipulation regarding the necessity of patrilineal inheritance of rights to reservation land. CPR, 3:56-57.
77. That women were important to alliance-making between native communities, and to community formation itself, in the post-Pequot War period is evinced in the efforts made by Niantic and Mohegan male leaders to marry Pequot women in the aftermath of the massacre. Seventeenth-century colonist Roger Williams reported to colonial officials that the Eastern Niantic Sachem Wequashcook had married the mother of the dead Pequot sachem Sassacus and was harboring a number of Pequot refugees after the massacre. As historian Glenn LaFantasie explains, the marriage "strengthened Wequashcook's rights to [Niantic] lands that overlapped into the Pequot Country, gave him added rights to incorporate Pequot survivors into his band,

and allowed him, at the very least, to demand hunting rights in the Pequot territory." Roger Williams reported, as well, that Uncas, in marrying the sister of Sassacus, "hath drawn all the scattered Pequots to himselfe and drawne much wealth from them." Glenn LaFantasie, *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, 2 vols. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988), 117, 121, 146. At least part of the "wealth" men like Uncas and Wequashcook acquired through marriages to these women, in addition to the economic benefit of access to Pequot lands and the political benefit of strengthening the numbers within their own communities, was cultural capital. For indeed, native women were not simply tokens of kinship or producers of offspring; they were perpetrators of cultural identities and cultural ties to land. There is also the overlooked likelihood that these women were sought after by Wequashcook and Uncas because they had considerable political savvy and political power in their own right.

78. CPR, 356-7.

79. An early eighteenth-century petition to the General Assembly from Eastern Pequot *sunksquaw* Mary Momoho serves to illuminate the complexity of natives' responses to colonial efforts to undermine the position of native women within their own communities. Her petition informed legislators of threats to her reservation community from several residents of Stonington, Connecticut, who "tell us that when one or two more of us be dead the [reservation] Lands will fall to them again." In response to this suggestion that Eastern Pequots were near extinction, Mary Momoho argued, "we suppose that there will be some pleas made that wee are almost all dead & indeed so we be but yet wee have Thirty three men yet alive which belong to Momoho besides women & Children therefore we would begg the Honoured Courtt that they would take prudent care of us as to Lett no Country Grants to be Laid upon our Lands." The petition is concluded with the line, "these from the sunk squaw which was the wife of Momoho and her men." In emphasizing the precise number of men in the reservation community—as well as her own, and her community's, continuing allegiance to the deceased male sachem

Momoho—Mary Momoho's petition indicates that she understood the necessity of deferring to colonists' patriarchal notions about land rights and political authority. Yet clearly her petition does not wholly acquiesce to the demands of colonial power. Indeed, it opens with a reminder to the Connecticut government "of the former unity which was betwixt you and our Nation [during King Philip's War]," and that "Momoho was then the Pecot Saysjium and had sixty men under him and att all your expeditions of War was ready to serve you & doubtless was a guard to your nation." Her petitions concluding line, which indicated that the male members of the Eastern Pequot reservation community were "*her men*," was surely an assertion of her authority by her own community's standards, not those of colonial society. In the record of the General Assembly's response to her petition, however, she is referred to as "Momoho's Squaw," rather than as a sachem or *sunksquaw* in her own right. Connecticut State Archives Collection, Early General Records of Connecticut: Papers and Correspondence of the General Assembly, the Governor and Counsel, and other Colony or State Officials, *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 73.

80. CPR, 6:78.

81. The same was often true with regard to the government's appointment of colonial "guardians" or "overseers" of reservation communities. See Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 135-81.

82. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 90.

83. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 90.

84. *Book of Proceedings*, 189-91; De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, 35; Mohegan Tribe, Petition for Federal Recognition, vol. 1, (1984), 79.

85. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 219-29; CPR, 6:148-49.

86. *Book of Proceedings*, 189-91; Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 221-29.

87. *Book of Proceedings*, 194; emphasis added.

88. Later in the eighteenth century, and beyond, the Connecticut government's surveillance of reservation communities and evaluation of their land rights would come to be cast in distinctly racialized terms. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 27-42, 343-72. On the Euroamerican racial notions of "Indian blood" and "blood quantum" as the standard means of assessing, and disparaging, Indian identity as well as native land rights in the nineteenth, and twentieth-century U.S., see Ward Churchill, "The Crucible of American Indian Identity," *Z Magazine*, January 1998, 47-51; M. Annette Jaimes, "American Racism: The Impact on American Indian Identity and Survival," in *Race*, ed. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Pauline Turner Strong and Barrik Van Winkle, "Indian Blood": Reflections on the Reckoning and Refiguring of Native North American Identity," *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (4) (1996): 547-76.

89. *Talcott Papers*, 1:330.

90. *Talcott Papers*, 1:310, 339.

91. *Talcott Papers*, 1:107n.

92. *Talcott Papers*, 1:327-28.

93. *Talcott Papers*, 1:329.

94. It is difficult to ascertain precisely how it was that Ben Uncas II came to cooperate with the Connecticut government in its effort to bring an end to the land dispute. In fact, when Ben Uncas II became sachem in 1726, after the death of his father Ben Uncas I, he petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly to announce that he had named four Mohegans as "Trustees or overseers for the Moheg Indians," and that he had made a Mohegan man, Jo Weebucks, the "True and Lawfull Attorney . . . for all the Mohegen Indians." The

Ben Uncas II had assigned Weebucks was to "Recover and require . . . Any Land Rents or herbage" that New London residents owed to Mohegans. Thus Ben Uncas II indicated early in his leadership that he was to press for Mohegans' land rights by demanding payment from colonists who had "leased" or encroached upon Mohegan reservation land, using it, for instance, for grazing their livestock. In addition, his naming of *Mohegans* as "trustees" or "overseers" for the reservation community defied the Connecticut government's practice of appointing colonial "guardians" as decision-makers for reservation communities. Yet, while Ben Uncas II had asserted Mohegans' political autonomy in his September 1726 petition, the General Assembly acknowledged neither the appointment of Jo Weebucks as Mohegans' attorney nor the complaint against ongoing colonial encroachment; instead, colonial legislators reappointed Wadsworth and Hall as Mohegans' official "guardians," empowering them to "take care of the sd Indian Affairs in the sd Mohegan Country by leasing out their Lands for their best benefit and advantage." *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., docs. 128, 129. For Ben Uncas II, then, it may have seemed that any effort to affirm Mohegans' political autonomy, and their land rights, against the wishes of the Connecticut government would in the end prove fruitless, and thus he may have opted to comply rather than resist. Whatever the case may have been, by 1736, Ben Uncas II was touted as the sole legitimate sachem of Mohegans by Governor Talcott, but clearly was not regarded as a leader by many, if not most, of his own people. See Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 231-60.

95. *Talcott Papers*, 1:3:339.

96. *Talcott Papers*, 1:3:850.

97. *Talcott Papers*, 1:3:850.

98. *Talcott Papers*, 1:3:850; emphasis added.

99. *Talcott Papers*, 1:3:850-51.

100. *Talcott Papers*, 1:377.
101. *Talcott Papers*, 1:361-63.
102. *Talcott Papers*, 1:365; emphasis added.
103. *Talcott Papers*, 1:365.
104. *Book of Proceedings*, 235-36.
105. *Book of Proceedings*, 235-36.
106. *Talcott Papers*, 1:374.

107. At this point, Governor Talcott was also troubled by a further political complication that would potentially impact the Mohegan case: the fact that Pequots and Niantics had joined Mohegan resisters in denouncing Ben Uncas II in 1736. According to Talcott, when Mohegans appeared before the next imperial commission to hear the case in 1738, they were joined by Pequot and Niantic supporters. Talcott sought to dismiss this political alliance as a mere contrivance, arguing that Pequots and Niantics "have Nothing at all in the Controversy." *Book of Proceedings*, 218; *Talcott Papers*, 2:54. But since Niantics, Mashantucket Pequots, and Mohegans had brought formal complaints against encroachers to the Connecticut General Assembly during his tenure as governor, Talcott well knew that these communities had a shared interest in protecting reservation land and in urging the government to enforce the colony's 1680 reservation law. Den Ouden, "Against Conquest," 252-60, 264-67, 326-34.

108. *Book of Proceedings*, 237.

109. *Book of Proceedings*, 237.

110. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 236.

111. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., docs. 236 and 1738; *Talcott Papers*, 2:198.
112. *Indian Papers*, 1st ser., doc. 158; *Book of Proceedings*, 218.
113. *Book of Proceedings*, 7.
114. *Talcott Papers*, 2:63.
115. Walters, "Mohegan Indians v. Connecticut," 812-13; Smith, *Appeals to the Privy Council*, 439.

116. Trudie Lamb Richmond, who has researched and written about the Green Corn Ceremony in seventeenth-century native New England, notes that it occurred "usually five days after the full moon during the month of the ripening corn—when it is still green but edible (late August or early September)." Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Out of the Earth I Sing: The Story of Corn," *Artifacts* 19 (2) (1991): 13. Richmond explains that the "great preparation of corn" entailed in the Green Corn Ceremony was carried out by women: "their mortars and pestles continually grinding corn," and thus representing "native people's relationship to all living and growing things." Trudie Lamb Richmond, "'Put Your Ear to the Ground and Listen.' The Wigwam Festival is the Green Corn Ceremony," *Artifacts* 17 (4) (1989): 25. See also Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 72-74. It is important to note that the Green Corn Ceremony continues among Mohegans today, known now as the Wigwam Festival. Melissa Jayne Fawcett, *The Lasting of the Mohegans: The Story of the Wolf People* (Ledyard, Conn.: Pequot Printing, 1995), 54.