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Cockacoeske: “She didn’t give up.”

Susan Elizabeth Shook

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on Cockacoeske, a female leader who led the Pamunkey between the years of 1656 and 1686. It describes the changing world Cockacoeske was born into. Pamunkey women's traditional role as farmers gave them high status in this changing world. Retelling the years of 1676 -1677 from Cockacoeske's perspective, a time period now called Bacon's Rebellion, the thesis argues that Cockacoeske knew her purpose was to make sure the Pamunkey survived. Her persistence in protecting and safeguarding Pamunkey rights and the land they lived on reflects her community spirit. The thesis also addresses how the Pamunkey of today, who continue to live in the place they did during the seventeenth century, remember Cockacoeske and her actions favorably, showing the continuity Cockacoeske made possible.

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Introduction

“She was the reason we have our reservation, because of her hard work. She was relentless. She didn’t give up.”

Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold¹

Cockacoeske was a woman who led the Pamunkey Indians of Eastern Virginia between the years of 1656 and 1686. These years were a challenging time to lead the Pamunkey for several reasons. Englishmen’s ongoing encroachment on Pamunkey land, which had begun before she came to leadership, curtailed the Pamunkey’s ability to farm and hunt and consequently caused them hunger. Then in the spring of 1675, a conflict arose between Virginia’s colonial governor, William Berkeley, and the popular leader, Nathaniel Bacon, that compounded the tenuous situation the Pamunkey were already in. Bacon resented Berkeley’s raising taxes to build forts at the colony’s frontiers to protect colonists involved in skirmishes with the Indians. He also resented Berkeley’s forbidding colonists to trade with the Indians while Berkeley himself had a profitable otter and bear trade with the Indians that supplied the Indians with ammunition. Bacon also wanted Pamunkey land.² This conflict led to what is now called Bacon’s Rebellion. Bacon led a crusade against all Indians, even the Pamunkey, who were on good terms with the English. Berkeley half-heartedly went along with Bacon’s anti-Indian campaign to keep from losing his decreasing authority. In June of 1676, the Virginia Grand Assembly set up laws that designated Indians enemies if they refused to help the English fight hostile Indians by sending the English their warriors.

¹ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold is a Pamunkey potter and the Pamunkey Museum manager who currently lives on the Pamunkey Reservation. Telephone interview by author, February, 2015.

² Michael Leroy Oberg, *Dominion and Civility: English Imperialism and Native America, 1586-1686* (New York: New Cornell University Press, 1999), 202.

When later the same month the English called Cockacoeske to Jamestown to ask her how many warriors she would give, she came with her son John West, a child she had from a union with Englishman Colonel John West, and an interpreter. With tears in her eyes, she “made a Harangue about a quarter of an hour,” and told the Assembly that she would give the English only twelve of her men as scouts, though one assemblyman, Thomas Mathew, believed she had “a hundred and fifty men in her town.”³

Cockacoeske is significant because she protected the Pamunkey throughout this time. Not only did she refuse to sacrifice all of her men’s lives, but she also led the Pamunkey to safety when Bacon attacked them later that same summer. After Bacon died and his men surrendered, she advocated for the Pamunkey at the Virginia government’s Grand Assembly. She reclaimed Pamunkey treaty lands, her personal possessions, and some of the Pamunkey prisoners Bacon had taken. Her work led to the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation, which established rights, including land rights, for the Indian tribes who signed it. Cockacoeske signed, bringing other tribes under her leadership. This treaty still stands and the Pamunkey today live on the land the treaty provided.

In the master narrative of Jamestown’s early history, we do not hear much of this strong and powerful woman, who as Pamunkey potter and Pamunkey Museum manager Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold states, “didn’t give up.” The focus of this thesis is Cockacoeske, her world, her leadership and her legacy. I address the following questions: Who was Cockacoeske? How do the Pamunkey of today remember her and her leadership story? How did she manage to protect the Pamunkey people and their lifeways during her leadership, especially

³ Thomas Mathew, “The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion, 1675-1676,” in *Narratives of the Insurrections, 1675-1690*, ed. Charles M. Andrews (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 25-27.

during and after Bacon's Rebellion? Most important, what would this time period look like told from Cockacoeske's point of view?

There are two historians, Ethan A. Schmidt and Martha W. McCartney, who have written articles specifically about Cockacoeske. Both articulate Cockacoeske's strength as a leader. Both also perceive her to have been a shrewd politician, more interested in gaining power than in sustaining the Pamunkey's lives and way of life. For example, Schmidt argues Cockacoeske's actions were politically savvy. Using Pocahontas, Cockacoeske's cousin, as a model to frame Cockacoeske's actions, he argues that Pocahontas's marriage to John Rolfe was diplomatic move just as Cockacoeske's union with Colonel John West was a political tactic.⁴ Schmidt also argues that Cockacoeske shrewdly arranged the wording of the 1677 treaty to reclaim leadership of the Powhatan chiefdom, a chiefdom ruled by the Pamunkey and consisting of approximately thirty tribes when John Smith arrived in Virginia in 1607.⁵

Schmidt credits Cockacoeske for the Pamunkey's ability to persevere today on their tribal land. However, the language he uses to describe her actions does not match the words written by Thomas Mathew, the assemblyman who was in the courtroom when Cockacoeske came in June of 1676. Mathew writes that at the onset of Cockacoeske's "Harangue" in the Jamestown court, she had "an earnest passionate Countenance as if Tears were ready to Gush out and a fervent sort of Expression."⁶ Schmidt states that Cockacoeske's "emotional outburst seems more a shrewd political stratagem designed to satisfy the Virginians of her

⁴ Ethan A. Schmidt, "Cockacoeske, Weroansqua of the Pamunkeys, and Indian Resistance in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 36, Issue 3(Summer 2012): 8,13, accessed September 21, 2014, [http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery?sid=c4bee391-6f2f-4665-862b-49590e69cc0e%.](http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery?sid=c4bee391-6f2f-4665-862b-49590e69cc0e%)

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ Mathew, "The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion," 26.

loyalty while at the same time incurring the least possible amount of loss to her own warrior base and ensuring that her people would receive some measure of economic settlement for whatever losses they suffered.”⁷ Mathew was sympathetic to Bacon, and had no reason to flatter Cockacoeske in his writing, yet his words do not suggest the cold and calculating woman Schmidt describes. Mathew’s words present Cockacoeske as sincere.

Martha W. McCartney’s article on Cockacoeske mirrors Schmidt’s idea that Cockacoeske’s actions were politically savvy. Like Schmidt, McCartney argues that Cockacoeske tried to reestablish the Powhatan chiefdom.⁸ Using primary sources written by the English such as the *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 1658-1693, the Treaty of Middle Plantation, and English commissioners Sir John Berry’s, Colonel Moryson’s and Herbert Jeffreys’s letters describing Cockacoeske and Indian–colonist relations, McCartney argues that Cockacoeske worked within the Virginia government’s dictates and that she conspired with this government to gain power.⁹ For example, based on her reading of the English commissioners’ letters, McCartney argues that Cockacoeske helped word the Treaty of Middle Plantation, so that tribes other than her Pamunkey were subjugated to her rule and required to pay yearly tribute to her.¹⁰

Though McCartney indicates that Cockacoeske may have tried to rebuild Powhatan’s Chiefdom to ensure her people’s survival, she hints that the “Queen of the Pamunkey,” as the

⁷ Schmidt, “Cockacoeske, Weroansqua of the Pamunkeys, and Indian Resistance in Seventeenth-Century Virginia,” 15.

⁸ Martha W. McCartney, “Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey: Diplomat and Suzeraine,” in *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast*, ed. Gregory A. Waselkov, Peter H. Wood and Thomas Hatley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 173.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 173, 176.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

English called her, cared most about English material goods. Using the “Narrative of the Commissioners,” written by Berry and Moryson, McCartney states that when Bacon attacked the Pamunkey, he stole “Indian mats, baskets, parcels of wampum peake, and pieces of linen, broadcloth, and other English goods the queen was said to value highly.”¹¹ Then, McCartney suggests that when Cockacoeske appealed to Virginia court for the return of the Pamunkey lands, her possessions and prisoners, she was most concerned with recovering her personal possessions. McCartney suggests this by ordering the things Cockacoeske appealed for as first her possessions and then Pamunkey land.¹² However, the *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1658-1690*, which records Cockacoeske’s appeals to the Virginia Assembly, shows that Cockacoeske’s first petition was “to have her lands restored.”¹³ McCartney also does not mention Cockacoeske’s appeal for the return of the forty-five Pamunkey prisoners taken by Bacon, which is included in the *Journal of the House of Burgesses*. I read this document as testimony that Cockacoeske had a community agenda at the courthouse. McCartney also states that when Bacon drove the Pamunkey off their lands, Cockacoeske got separated from her tribe.¹⁴ However, there are sources that contradict this and I show how other conclusions can be drawn.

Drawing on American Indian scholar Duane Champagne’s argument, I disagree with Schmidt’s and McCartney’s conclusions about Cockacoeske. Champagne argues that

¹¹ McCartney, “Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey,” 178.

¹² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹³ H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, comps., *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 13 vols. (Richmond, Va.: Library Board, 1905-15) 1659/60-1693, 89.

¹⁴ McCartney, “Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey,” 178.

“western scholarly culture” has a tendency to interpret things politically versus culturally.¹⁵

This approach, Champagne asserts, does not point to how Native American groups have sustained themselves during colonization using their own cultures’ ways.¹⁶ Champagne’s argument leads me to ask how did Cockacoeske see this time in history that she lived in? How can we see Cockacoeske and her leadership style in a Pamunkey-centered way?

Native American scholars Devon A. Mihesuah and Paula Gunn Allen offer some help in looking at Cockacoeske through a Native American perspective. Allen argues that Native American history must be told from a Native American perspective. Allen also argues that when Native American history focuses on Indian women instead of Indian men, we will see a story of continued living, of survival.¹⁷ Allen’s argument pertains to Cockacoeske, a female leader whose actions helped to create the Pamunkey’s well-being today.

Mihesuah also offers some guidance in understanding Cockacoeske. She recommends that writers writing about a Native American woman challenge stereotypes by writing about the specific time she lived, her specific tribe, her feelings, her looks, her self-perception, and her relationships with other women.¹⁸ In retelling the story of Cockacoeske’s leadership, I explore Cockacoeske’s relationship with a Pamunkey woman referred to by the English as “the Queen’s nurse,” her relationship with other Pamunkey, and her feelings in the Virginia

¹⁵ Duane Champagne, “American Studies Is for Everyone,” in *Native and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press 1998), 182.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁷ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 262.

¹⁸ Devon A. Mihesuah, “The Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History,” in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 38, 46.

courtroom when asked how many men she would give the English to help fight enemy Indians.¹⁹

Mihesuah argues that there is no “monolithic, essential Indian woman.”²⁰ Mihesuah’s arguments challenge Schmidt’s methodology of using Pocahontas as an archetype for understanding Cockacoeske. Mihesuah also asserts that, though Indian women have shared challenges, including land loss, marrying outside of their race, wars and genocide, they have dealt with their challenges in a multitude of ways.²¹ For example, in exploring the reasons why Indian women married white men, Mihesuah includes love. I use Mihesuah’s argument as a way to see Cockacoeske’s union with John West, a relationship that historian Helen C. Rountree suggests was loving.²²

Mihesuah argues that, though recently there has been more history written about Indian women and it strives to be more accurate, there is some inaccuracy and lack of development because the women being researched or the descendants of the women being researched have not been consulted. She criticizes this “New Indian History” because it includes no Indian renderings, no voices of Indians.²³ Using personal interviews with Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold and Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown, as well as English primary sources from the

¹⁹ John Berry and Francis Moryson, “A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677” in *Narratives of the Insurrections: 1675-1690*, ed. Charles M. Andrews (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 125.

²⁰ Mihesuah, “The Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History,” 37.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²² Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas’s People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 112.

²³ Mihesuah, “The Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History,” 37.

seventeenth century, along with secondary sources, my thesis will offer a new perspective on Cockacoeske.

In the first part of my thesis, *The Changing World Cockacoeske Lived In*, I recreate the world in which Cockacoeske lived to explain her challenges, her power and her success. Looking at traditional Pamunkey culture, I focus on historian Helen C. Rountree's idea of Pamunkey women's value as farmers.²⁴ Rountree writes that women held high status because of their producing corn.²⁵ Analyzing the changes that occurred in Virginia during Cockacoeske's life, I explore how Pamunkey women's traditional role of farming may have given them clout in the new Pamunkey-English intercultural relationship as well. I seek to show how this traditional role gave Cockacoeske self-agency with both the Pamunkey and the English. This chapter also explores the challenges English colonization of Virginia presented to the Pamunkey and it seeks to show how these challenges affected Cockacoeske's later leadership decisions.

Then in the second part of the thesis, "*She didn't give up*," I retell the story of Cockacoeske's leadership using English primary sources and Chief Brown's oral history.²⁶ The combination of these sources gives a richer and more complete understanding of Cockacoeske and her decisions. This part focuses on the years of 1676 and 1677, during what is now referred to as Bacon's Rebellion. It shows what led to Bacon's Rebellion, describes the Rebellion itself, and its upshot. I show Cockacoeske's perseverance –her refusal to sacrifice her warriors to the English to help them fight enemy Indians, her leading the

²⁴ Helen C. Rountree, *The Powhatan Indian of Virginia: Their Traditional Culture* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 89.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, telephone interview by the author, February, 2015.

Pamunkey to safety when Bacon pushed them off their land, and her returning to this same land when it was safe to return, and later formally reclaiming that land at the Grand Assembly after the rebellion had died.

In the last part, *The outcomes of Cockacoeske's leadership; how the Pamunkey remember her, and conclusion*, I discuss the outcomes of Cockacoeske's work as a leader or as a *weroansqua*, a word meaning woman leader in the Powhatan language. Using personal interviews with Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold and current Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown, I show how the treaty Cockacoeske inspired and signed, protected, and saved the Pamunkey and some of their traditional Pamunkey culture and beliefs. I show the results of Cockacoeske's advocating for the Pamunkey on the Pamunkey of today.

My thesis shows exactly what Krigsvold says, that Cockacoeske's tenacity safeguarded the Pamunkey Indians' lives and rights.²⁷ It explores the relationship between the traditional role of Pamunkey women as farmers and Cockacoeske's power as a leader and it highlights Cockacoeske's community agenda in protecting the Pamunkey.

The Changing World Cockacoeske Lived In

Pamunkey women grew corn and this gave them power.²⁸ They also grew beans, squash, melons, and passion fruit. Women's production of corn brought them high status.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold asserted in interview that "the majority of Pamunkey women farmed." Interview by author, October 25, 2014.

²⁹ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 89.

Corn was like money and the women managed its distribution.³⁰ By farming Pamunkey women were self-supporting, as well as supportive to their tribe.

In the same year Cockacoeske was born, 1640, Englishmen began claiming land above the York River, in the Pamunkey River area, where Pamunkey women farmed.³¹ On this land stood hickory and oak trees and abundant rain fell. Colonists believed that this land interspersed with rivers had the best alluvial soil, and therefore made the best land for growing tobacco, a crop that they had discovered could make them a profit.³² The English claim on Pamunkey land affected the Pamunkey in various ways. It meant loss of land for the Pamunkey to farm on. It also restricted the Pamunkey's traditional custom of moving every two years to let the sandy soil they grew their crops in replenish itself.³³ Ironically, the English's ambition of growing tobacco made them rely on Indian corn for food.³⁴ Colonists' dependence on Indian women's corn made Indian women important agents in the Indian-English encounter. The fact that Pamunkey women's corn kept the English alive during the years that they were establishing their colony may be linked with Cockacoeske's belief that she had a say-so with the English.

Cockacoeske grew up in a world where women provided for their community in other ways too. They gathered foods such as acorns, walnuts, and hickory nuts to eat in the winter.³⁵ In the summer, they picked wild red mulberries, strawberries, and cherries by the

³⁰ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 89.

³¹ Helen C. Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 82.

³² Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, colonists, and slaves in South Atlantic forests, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107.

³³ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*. 46.

³⁴ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 81.

³⁵ Plaque, Pamunkey Museum, (King William, VA.).

river's edge, and found and dug Tuckahoes (wild potatoes).³⁶ The English taking lands that the Pamunkey foraged on though, reduced Pamunkey women's ability to forage these food supplies. However, Pamunkey women continued to make baskets and a type of pottery called blackware. They traded these handmade items with the English.³⁷

Pamunkey women also built their houses called *yehakins*. They made these longhouses by bending tree saplings into a frame. Then they placed barks sheets, tanned deerskins, or grass sheets over this frame.³⁸ William Strachey, an Englishman who came to Virginia in 1610, observed that wealthier Indians used bark mats.³⁹ Because Cockacoeske was the daughter of the head chief of the Powhatan Confederacy, it is likely that the house she grew up in had bark sheets for walls and roofs.

Cockacoeske's parents probably had an arranged marriage. Her father, Openchakeno, had inherited the Powhatan Confederacy's leadership from his brother, Opitchapam, who led briefly after another brother, Powhatan, died in 1618. Current Pamunkey Chief Brown states that, "Powhatan built his confederacy through arranged marriages."⁴⁰ Most likely Openchakeno continued this practice of marrying women for the political objective of strengthening the Powhatan Confederacy and had many wives. Cockacoeske's later marriage to the leader Topotomoy, was most likely an arranged marriage too.⁴¹ When he died in 1656, she became the new leader, the *weroansqua*.

³⁶ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia* 52, 44, 45.

³⁷ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 145.

³⁸ Sandra F. Waugaman and Danielle Moretti-Langholtz, *We're Still Here: Contemporary Indians Tell Their Stories* (Richmond: Palari Publishing, 2000), 20; Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 61.

⁴⁰ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December, 23, 2015.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Cockacoeske grew up in a culture in which extended families lived together in the same house. “It was the grandparents, the aunts and the uncles, like twenty some people in the longhouse, the family,” Krigsvold states.⁴² Maybe Cockacoeske’s family environment fostered her community spirit, which later propelled her to advocate for the Pamunkey.

The *yehakin* Cockacoeske may have lived in was temporary.⁴³ It needed to last only a limited time because traditionally the Pamunkeys moved with the seasons, up and down the rivers.⁴⁴ Twice yearly they moved.⁴⁵ While their corn ripened, they left their village to gather foods. Men also fished. They oystered and hunted turtles, crabs and snakes in the summer months too.⁴⁶ When November came, they relocated to hunt.⁴⁷ Through this lifestyle, Cockacoeske became familiar with the land, which afforded her to find refuge for her people when the Baconites later drove them off the land they camped on.

The land the Pamunkeys lived on changed in other ways during Cockacoeske’s first years. Nearby colonists who had settled near the Pamunkey allowed their livestock, specifically their hogs, to run free. These hogs wandered into Pamunkey women’s unfenced cornfields and ate the corn.⁴⁸ Historian John Richter states not specifically about the Pamunkey, but of

⁴² Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, interview by author, October, 25, 2014.

⁴³ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 61-62.

⁴⁴ Robert Steven 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), 45.

⁴⁵ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 45.

⁴⁶ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 44-45.

⁴⁷ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 45.

⁴⁸ Helen C. Rountree and Thomas E. Davidson, *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 61.

Indians in general, that these European hogs also raided Indians' storage pits of food.⁴⁹ These hogs also dug up clams Native women were in the custom of digging and eating.⁵⁰ Cockacoeske grew up at a time, therefore, when food supply decreased.

Cockacoeske lived within a culture that did not believe in individual land ownership. Krigsvold states that current Pamunkey continue this belief: "[T]he tribe, the reservation owns the land. We don't. Individuals don't own the land."⁵¹ This idea of land conflicted with English who believed in individual land ownership.⁵² The Pamunkey view land as *michi a pichi*, which means Mother Earth.⁵³ This implies that the Pamunkey had and continue to have a connection to the earth that the colonists who viewed land as something to be claimed and leased did not see.

In 1644, when Cockacoeske was four, her father led an attack on the English. Unlike his earlier successful attack in 1622, this one resulted in his being captured and killed. This event ushered in more restrictions on the Pamunkey. In 1646, Necotowance, the new leader of the much reduced Powhatan Confederacy, signed a treaty that gave away most of the Powhatan lands that included Pamunkey lands, and that recognized that the land they lived upon was no longer theirs, but that the King of England allowed them the right to occupy this land.⁵⁴ The treaty required the Powhatan Indians to pay yearly tribute to the Virginia governor.⁵⁵ It also forbade Powhatans to travel south of the Pamunkey River to the land

⁴⁹ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 58.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵¹ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, interview by author, October 25, 2014.

⁵² Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 54-55.

⁵³ Chief Kevin Brown, interview by author, October 25, 2014.

⁵⁴ McCartney, "Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey," 174.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

between the York and James Rivers.⁵⁶ If they did, Necotowance warned them, they would be shot.⁵⁷ The only exception to this law pertained to Indians on diplomatic business with the English. When traveling they had to wear a special striped-clothe jacket that easily identified them as tributary Indians.⁵⁸ Cockacoeske witnessed the devastation of the Pamunkey and other Powhatan Indians.

By the time Cockacoeske was eight, she had seen the land change visibly due to the English clearing it for tobacco fields. Thousands of acres of land in her area had been rid of the timber, cleared for the English to farm.⁵⁹ Deforestation caused the animals in the area, bears, wolves, panthers, and turkeys to lose their homes and move.⁶⁰ With English dominating the land, many Indians began working for them. The English paid Indians a bounty to kill wolves, who preyed on English livestock.⁶¹ Cockacoeske saw the decline of wolves.

Cockacoeske most likely saw a decline of the Powhatan and specifically the Pamunkey population as well. English brought diseases such as smallpox and measles, diseases that the Pamunkey were not immune to. In North America, smallpox epidemics killed more than half the Indian population, sometimes as much as 90 percent of the population.⁶² There is a wide range of estimates about how much the Virginia Indian population decreased after the English came. One estimate states that the Powhatan population decreased 33 percent

⁵⁶ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 87.

⁵⁷ McCartney, "Cockacoeske, Queen of the Pamunkey," 175.

⁵⁸ Plaque, Pamunkey Museum.

⁵⁹ Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 108.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶¹ Rountree, *Eastern Shore Indians*, 76.

⁶² Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 74

between the years of 1607 and 1660.⁶³ Another says that there was a 81 percent decrease in the population of Virginia Indians between the time the English had settled in Virginia and 1685.⁶⁴ Surely, Cockacoeske had witnessed Pamunkey dying due to the diseases new to the Pamunkey.

Cockacoeske also was born into a time when English began using Virginia Indians as servants and slaves.⁶⁵ Enslavement of Indians increased in the 1660s, when tobacco became Virginia's top export and when Cockacoeske led the Pamunkey.⁶⁶ As a child, she had probably seen African slaves too. The first Africans came to Virginia in 1619, twenty-one years before her birth. Virginia Indians did not make good slaves because "we knew this place like the back of our hand, so we could easily slip off, hide in the bush and r[u]n and that's what we did," says Chief Kevin Brown.⁶⁷ Though no specific evidence states Cockacoeske witnessed English enslaving Pamunkey as she grew up, she certainly took it seriously when she petitioned the Grand Assembly for the return of the Pamunkey Bacon had taken captive, who under the law at the time would have remained slaves for life.

Cockacoeske lived during a time when her fellow Powhatan were frequently killed by Englishmen for hunting wild animals and later hogs in unfenced English lands, lands the English had left fallow, and lands the English had yet to claim.⁶⁸ By the time she was nine, these killings had escalated to such a degree that the Assembly had to write a law specifying

⁶³ Virginia Johnson, "The Queene of Pomonky," *Librarypoint, Central Rappahannock Regional Library*, accessed January 31, 2013, http://www.librarypoint.org/queene_of_pomonky.

⁶⁴ Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 82.

⁶⁵ Rountree and Davidson, *Eastern Shore Indians of Virginia and Maryland*, 76.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76; Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 73.

⁶⁷ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by the author, December 23, 2014.

⁶⁸ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 128-129.

when it was legal to kill Indians.⁶⁹ In 1655, a law passed stating that the English could kill Indians caught killing livestock. The Pamunkey suffered for lack of meat.⁷⁰ Only when Cockacoeske petitioned the Grand Assembly in February of 1677, did the Pamunkey revive their rights to hunt, fish and gather foods on unpatented lands.

“She didn’t give up.”⁷¹

Cockacoeske probably heard about the escalating troubles between the Indians and the English in 1675 and the rumblings of a war to come. For example, though the Doeg Indians were further north in Maryland and non-treaty Indians, in July she would have heard of their vigilante raid against Virginia colonist Thomas Mathew for a trading dispute, of Mathew’s then seeking revenge, beating or killing some Indians, and of the Doegs then killing Mathew’s servant.⁷² Englishmen went seeking the Doegs and killed ten, along with their leader, but also killed fourteen Susquehannocks whom they mistook for Doegs. Indian attacks on Virginians in frontier areas became more frequent. Cockacoeske felt Indian and colonist relations shifting and knew that she would need to find a way for the Pamunkey to survive.

It is likely too that Cockacoeske knew of the tension between Virginia Governor Berkeley and a new popular leader, Nathaniel Bacon. When Berkeley called an Assembly March 7, 1676, and proposed building forts at the tops of rivers to protect settlers on the fringes of the colony from northern Indians, many Virginians thought the forts were a waste of their taxes; they also disliked the assemblymen’s high salaries. Many Virginians feared Indians,

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁷¹ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, telephone interview by author, February 2015.

⁷² Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 251.

however. In April of 1676, they had their leader, Bacon, who stated that he wanted to “not only ruine and extirpate all Indians in generall but all Manner of Trade and Commerce with them.”⁷³ Cockacoeske would have been disturbed by this, but not surprised.

Cockacoeske knew Englishmen chiefly wanted land; this was nothing new. Berkeley wrote that Virginians in New Kent, the county where the Pamunkey lived, wanted Pamunkey land.⁷⁴ While it was swampy, the colonists knew this river-silty soil yielded the best tobacco crop.⁷⁵

Though Cockacoeske must have heard that Berkeley deposed Bacon from council on May 10, 1676, she must have also heard about his proclamation five days later stating that all Indians were enemies.⁷⁶

Cockacoeske understood the danger to the Pamunkey. When she heard about the Grand Assembly Acts passed on June 5, 1676, which defined what constituted an enemy Indian, she knew she had to make a choice about whether or not the Pamunkey would do anything not to be labeled an enemy Indians. Act I stated that if Indians left their designated treaty lands without permission, did not give up their guns and ammunition, harbored enemy or unknown Indians, traded or talked with these Indians, did not give a census record of their group and probably most important, did not give their men as soldiers to help the English, they were now enemies.⁷⁷ Besides that, Act I stated that English soldiers got to keep all the loot they

⁷³ Ibid., 266.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 258.

⁷⁵ Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 107.

⁷⁶ Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 260.

⁷⁷ William Waller Hening *The Statutes at Large, Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature*, (New York: R. & W. & G. Bartow, 1823), Vol. 2, p. 341-348.

stole from Indians and Indians captured would be slaves for life.⁷⁸

Act II further jeopardized the Pamunkey, stating that no Englishmen could trade with Indians, but more important, that Pamunkey could not hunt or fish off their treaty land or use guns. The Pamunkey starved.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Englishmen encroached on Pamunkey lands designated by the 1646 treaty. English cattle and hogs raided Pamunkey women's gardens, eating corn and other crops. When the Pamunkey complained, the Englishmen shot them.⁸⁰ These newly passed Acts severely impacted the Pamunkey's well-being. Act III was no better, stating that if Indians left their lands, these lands would be taken permanently and used to help foot the cost of what the June 1676 Grand Assembly termed "a war against the Indians."⁸¹ These acts horrified Cockacoeske, but she faced them. She could not afford to give her men to such a war. She knew the futility of sending her men to fight enemy Indians and did not want to waste their lives. Her husband Topotomoy and 100 Pamunkey warriors had died helping the English fight the enemy Rickahominy Indians twenty years ago, and the Pamunkey had received nothing.⁸² She knew then she would not give up her warriors to fight in this war. She decided the Pamunkey's answer. They would not give the English all of their warriors. She realized that she had to redefine the terms that she would live with the English by. This, she must have realized, would define the Pamunkey as enemies in the English's eyes.

Sometime in June, soon after these Acts were passed, Cockacoeske went to Jamestown to meet with the Committee of Indian Affairs, a group formed from the elected assemblymen.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2:341-348.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2:350-351.

⁸⁰ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 94.

⁸¹ Hening, *The Statutes at Large*, 2:351-352.

⁸² Mathew, "The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion," 26.

Cockacoeske's twenty-year old son, John West, and her interpreter, Cornelius Dabney, accompanied her. She must have found the room smelly. The English, unlike the Pamunkey, did not bathe daily. She wore a fringed mantle made of deerskin, around her head a garland of "Black and White Wampum," circular shell beads that Native Americans sometimes used for ceremonies and sacred purposes.⁸³ Mathew, a Bacon sympathizer, described Cockacoeske as having a "Comportment Gracefull to Admiration."⁸⁴ Cockacoeske, her son and her interpreter walked the length of the room to one side of the table. Someone in the assembly asked her to sit down, but she did not do so immediately. Maybe she needed to firm her resolve to state that the Pamunkey would not give all their men for this war. Again someone asked her to sit. Finally, after repeated requests, she sat; her son and interpreter remained standing.⁸⁵

When the Assembly chairman asked Cockacoeske how many men she would provide as scouts and soldiers "to assist us against our Enemy Indians," she did not immediately answer.⁸⁶ With the gravity of the situation in mind, she asked her interpreter to translate the chairman's request into her native Powhatan language, though Mathew believed she understood English.⁸⁷ Then she told Dabney to have the chairman ask her son to answer the question because he knew English. When her son was asked, however, he refused to speak and seemed not to understand. The interpreter explained to the assembly that Cockacoeske's

⁸³ Mathew, "The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion, 1675-1676," 25.

⁸⁴ Mathew, "The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion, 1675-1676," 25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

son honored whatever answer his mother gave.⁸⁸ Then Cockacoeske addressed the Assembly in her own tongue. Mathew writes that she,

with an earnest passionate Countenance as if Tears were ready to Gush out and a fervent sort of Expression made a Harangue about a quarter of an hour, often interlacing (with a high shrill Voice and vehement passion) these Words, *Tatapatamoi Chepiack, i.e. Tatapatamoi dead.* Coll: Hill being next to me, Shook his head. I ask'd him What was the matter, he told me all that she said was too true to our Shame, and that his father was Generall in that Battle, where diverse Years before Tatapatamoi her Husband had Led a Hundred of his Indians to help to th' English against our former Enemy Indians, and was there Slaine with most of his men, for which no Compensation (at all) had been to that day Rendered to her wherewith she now upbraided us.⁸⁹

No sacrifice of Pamunkey warriors would be made. She would not let Pamunkey warriors die in vain again.

The Assembly's chairperson did not apologize to Cockacoeske for not remunerating her for her husband's death nor thank her for her husband's previous service. He simply repeated the question, "What Indians will you now Contribute?"⁹⁰ She must have been angry because Mathew wrote that, "of this Disregard she Signified her Resentment by a disdainfull aspect, and turning her head half a side, Sate mute till that same Question being press'd, a Third time."⁹¹ Then Cockacoeske gave her answer. "Six," she stated in Powhatan.⁹² If she gave six men, the English could not use these men as the vanguard of their army, the first to be shot and killed. The English would have to use them as guides, the purpose for which they stated they had wanted them. As guides, Cockacoeske knew, they would be better treated than warriors. The chairman pressured her some more and Cockacoeske made her

⁸⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁹¹ Ibid., 27.

⁹² Ibid., 27.

final offer: “Twelve.”⁹³ Maybe she knew the chairman would try to pressure her further; she rose and left the room, “not pleased with her Treatment,” Mathew concluded.⁹⁴ He also believed she had 150 men available to give, though a 1669 census counted only fifty Pamunkey bowmen.⁹⁵ Certainly the number of Pamunkey men had not increased so much in seven years. Perhaps Mathew overestimated the number of Pamunkey warriors out of fear. However, fear did not cloud his ability to perceive Cockacoeske’s hurt and outrage.

Cockacoeske probably felt good about her actions and how she had spoken for the Pamunkey. Though she knew that her giving the English only twelve men would very likely classify the Pamunkey as enemies under Act I’s guidelines, she also knew she had protected her tribe.

She had traveled the fifty miles from her homeland to assure the preservation of the Pamunkey people. She probably traveled home by the same route as she had come. Maybe she traveled with her son. (Dabney lived near Topotomoy Creek in Henrico County, which was twenty-five miles southwest of the Pamunkey camp, so he would have either traveled alone or at one point parted company with Cockacoeske.)⁹⁶ Maybe Cockacoeske’s party paddled up the York River to West Point. Perhaps Cockacoeske stopped there to see Colonel West, her son’s father, and he comforted her, or perhaps she simply continued north, up the Pamunkey River to her camp. Rain probably fell. It was the start of a very rainy summer in this area in 1676, though less than fifty miles away the lack of rain stunted crops. Here, as

⁹³ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁹⁵ Rountree, *Pocahontas’s People*, 112.

⁹⁶ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, February 2015; Dabney McLean, “About Cornelius Dabney Sr.,” Geni, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.geni.com/people/Cornelius-Dabney-Sr/6000000001396118389>.

she paddled, mosquitoes bit. Maybe she and her son stopped by the river to eat. When she arrived at her camp, she went into her *yehakin*. There would have been food prepared for her, maybe roasted shad, turtle or bear and corncakes. A fire would have burned inside as it always did—the women made sure of this.⁹⁷ Her family probably asked her what she had told the English and what they had said in response. Cockacoeske would have told them all or only the brief version, waiting for the next day to tell all. She changed out of her wet clothes, warmed herself, and went to bed. She heard the rain drum on the roof made of bark or grass mats. Perhaps she heard a wolf howl and fell asleep.

The next day she told her people all that she had learned in Jamestown and the English Assembly's cool response to her decision to provide them with only twelve men to help fight enemy Indians. She warned them that Bacon and other Englishmen would come. She made them ready.

The Pamunkey most probably left their camp and growing corn to forage for food. Rain continued to fall on their already marshy land. When they came to the area where the food they foraged grew, Cockacoeske stopped. The women built their house frames with saplings and the mats they had carried.

Cockacoeske knew the Baconites would come and she had scouts at all times on the lookout. Rain fell almost continually. Sometime during the summer, her scouts reported to her that ten of Bacon's scouts approached. Her scouts fired at Bacon's.⁹⁸ Cockacoeske instructed the Pamunkey not to shoot the Baconites but to run. They left behind their

⁹⁷ Rountree, *Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, 51.

⁹⁸ John Berry and Francis Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia, by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 124.

possessions, including her corn vessels.⁹⁹ Bacon drove the Pamunkey into the center of the swamp where they had been camped, but he decided the marshy ground was too deadly for him to enter.¹⁰⁰

Cockacoeske may have led the Pamunkey over the wettest parts of the swamp on bridges they had built. Made out of horizontal poles fastened with bark to forked sticks stuck in mud, these walkways supported the Pamunkey in their light moccasins, but not the English with their heavy boots and guns.¹⁰¹ Without their belongings, the Pamunkey traveled even faster.

Though Bacon managed to kill a woman and steal a Pamunkey child and Cockacoeske's nurse, most of the Pamunkey got away and survived.¹⁰² When Cockacoeske's nurse led Bacon astray for close to two days instead of taking him to her people's refuge, he killed her.¹⁰³ The nurse's solidarity helped save the Pamunkey and reveals their community feeling.

Cockacoeske led the Pamunkey to an area filled with food. There were grapes and chinkapins—dwarf chestnuts. The area nestled between two streams that provided the Pamunkey with water. Tree saplings grew there too that were used by the women to build *yehakins*. Here they made their temporary home.

In early September, Cockacoeske faced Bacon again. He must have wanted the land. Land with grapevines and oaks was known to be prime tobacco-growing land.¹⁰⁴ Bacon came to the area with his men, between 100 and 200 soldiers, killed some Pamunkey and

⁹⁹ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰¹ Rountree, *The Powhatan Indians of Virginia*, p. 64

¹⁰² John Berry and Francis Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia, by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 125.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 125.

¹⁰⁴ Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, 107.

captured forty-five.¹⁰⁵ Cockacoeske's son West was probably captured at this time. Though devastated, Cockacoeske remained courageous. To the Pamunkey, she repeated her message not to shoot but to run. Again, they left behind what possessions they had, and Cockacoeske led the remaining Pamunkey, about thirty in all, to Dragon Swamp, located between the Mattaponi and Piankatank Rivers. The trip was roughly thirty miles. To get there, they had to first travel south to West Point, about eighteen miles away. Then they had to travel east twelve miles through estuaries. Perhaps they canoed down the Pamunkey River to West Point, crossed the Mattaponi River, then walked east or maybe they walked along the Pamunkey River, then swam or somehow crossed the Mattaponi River and then continued to walk eastward to Dragon Swamp.¹⁰⁶ Current Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown states that traveling to Dragon Swamp "was a really difficult thing to do," and "a long haul."¹⁰⁷ Still, they made it to Dragon Swamp safely. Cockacoeske and the Pamunkey felt the loss of her son and the other Pamunkey Bacon had taken prisoner, but they needed to focus on the group's survival.

In Dragon Swamp, they took refuge and hid for a rough estimate of two weeks. They lived amongst the panthers, wolves and bobcats who thrived in the swamps.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps Bacon abandoned following the Pamunkey for fear of these animals. In the swamp, Pamunkey lived on raw fish, bugs, terrapins, nuts and berries.¹⁰⁹ They probably did not build fires so as not to be found. Without their cook-pots, their mats for houses and their hunting

¹⁰⁵ Berry and Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 127.

¹⁰⁶ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Silver, *A New Face of the Countryside*, 26.

¹⁰⁹ Chief Kevin Brown, interview by author, October 2, 2014, and telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014; Berry and Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 127.

and fishing equipment, they lived an uncomfortable life and a fearful life. Rain fell as it had continually done all summer. However, the Pamunkey survived with dignity. Maybe Cockacoeske sent scouts to determine Bacon's whereabouts and to see if he still chased them. Maybe her scouts went to Colonel John West's plantation in West Point and acquired the news that Bacon had to temporarily abandon his pursuit of the remaining Pamunkey because he now was busy fighting Governor Berkeley and his men. When she felt it was safe to travel back to the reservation, Cockacoeske led the Pamunkey back to their original land.¹¹⁰ It was mid-September and the corn would have been ripe for harvesting. Here Cockacoeske and the remaining free Pamunkey recuperated.

Cockacoeske probably heard about Bacon's putting captured Pamunkey prisoners on display like trophies as he marched on the road to Jamestown. She probably also heard about the Virginians' warm welcome to him. She knew of his mission to kill the Indians. The royal commissioners sent from England reported that Bacon publicly stated that he "vowed to performe against these heathen, which should I return not successful in some manner to daminifie and affright them wee should have them as animated as the English discouraged."¹¹¹ Cockacoeske probably knew that, in accordance with the Grand Assembly Acts, all captured Indians would be sold as slaves. She wanted the release of her son. Before Bacon's death in October, a plea was made to Bacon for a prisoner exchange; three of his men were exchanged for two loyal to Governor Berkeley, one of which was Major West,

¹¹⁰ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

¹¹¹ Berry and Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 125, 126.

Cockacoeske's son.¹¹² Bacon agreed to this exchange and Cockacoeske's son was released.¹¹³ She most certainly influenced this deal.

Though she may have been relieved to hear of Bacon's death, the Assembly Acts still stated that all Indians caught would be enslaved. That meant the other forty-four Pamunkey prisoners needed to be freed. Though Berkeley and Bacon disagreed on many issues, they agreed on enslaving Indians. Berkeley had sold some of the prisoners, and Bacon had also sold some of these prisoners before he died.¹¹⁴ The Countie's Grievances document written by commissioners John Berry and Francis Moryson, who were sent to Virginia by King Charles II to deal with Bacon's Rebellion, reports that the Virginians asked to sell Indians caught in the "Indian war."¹¹⁵ The commissioners did not grant this request. Still, this document shows the feelings the majority of Virginians had toward Indians.¹¹⁶

Cockacoeske probably heard about the Virginia colony's surrender to Berkeley on January 16, 1677.¹¹⁷ Whether or not she received a summons to the Assembly held on February 20, 1677, at Berkeley's home at Greene Spring on the same day he returned to it, she knew she had to go. She probably met with her council to prepare her appeal to the Assembly. Her requests included the return of Pamunkey land, personal property and Pamunkey prisoners, along with a guarantee that Pamunkey rights be respected.

¹¹² Ibid, 138.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Charles M. Andrews's footnote in Berry and Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 127.

¹¹⁵ John Berry, Francis Moryson and Herbert Jeffreys, "The Counties' Grievances" in *Samuel Wiseman's Book of Record: The Official Account of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia*, ed. Michael Leroy Oberg (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005), 211.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 211.

¹¹⁷ Berry and Moryson, "A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677," 140.

She may have walked the whole way down to Greene Spring that winter, the rivers being frozen. Her trip was cold and long, approximately fifty miles. She probably did not stop and see her husband Colonel John West because he had been captured by Baconites after Bacon died.¹¹⁸

Maybe she took a route that passed the ruined Jamestown, which Bacon and his men had burnt down the previous September. No matter which way she traveled, she continued on to Greene Spring.

At the Assembly, Cockacoeske first reclaimed her land.¹¹⁹ Assembly's records indicate she petitioned "to have her lands restored which shee formerly held alleging her leaving her towne was occasioned through her feare of the Rebell *Bacon* and his Complices."¹²⁰ This indicates that the English did not fully believe her and that she understood that Indians' deserted land was up for grabs by the colonists. It also indicates her telling the truth. The Assembly "thought [it] reasosnable y her land bee restored to her provided she comply with the Acts of Assembly made in March last and all injunctions as shall from time to time bee enjoyned her by the Grand Assembly."¹²¹ Maybe this meant she needed to provide the English with warriors if they asked her again. She also asked to recover the Pamunkey Bacon had taken prisoner. The Assembly said yes, though the words the assemblymen wrote imply there were complications. Some Pamunkey had already been sold. The Assembly

¹¹⁸ John Berry, Francis Moryson and Herbert Jeffreys, "Letters of English commissioners Sir John Berry, Colonel Moryson and Herbert Jeffreys," in *Samuel Wiseman's Book of Record: The Official Account of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia*, ed. Michael Leroy Oberg (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005), 282.

¹¹⁹ H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 89.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

stated that if there were disputes about this, they would be settled in county court.¹²² In the end, five Pamunkey were returned.¹²³ Cockacoeske also asked for her personal property taken by Bacon to be returned. That included mats, baskets, matchcotes, wampum in bags, furs, and pieces of linen –“3 horse-loades full.”¹²⁴ The court granted her restoration of her personal property, provided she return the horses and property the Pamunkey had taken from the English or bought from enemy Indians.¹²⁵

Cockacoeske also asked for a restoration of a variety of Pamunkey rights. For example, the Assembly record states that in her second appeal she was, “praying y’ her Indians may not bee entertained nor imployed by the *English*.”¹²⁶ Here she advocated the preservation of Pamunkey culture. She was trying to prevent the Pamunkey from relying on English goods, including alcohol, which might happen if they stayed with the English.¹²⁷ Her prayer demonstrates her desire for the Pamunkey’s self-reliance, something her father, Openchakeno had also advocated. When the English had asked him to send warriors to come and live with them and be educated, he had said no. What could they learn from the English about hunting and survival?¹²⁸ The Assembly granted Cockacoeske’s petition that Pamunkey not be housed by the English, stating “It is thought convenient that noe *Englishman* upon any p’tence whatsoever imploy any Indians belonging to the Queene of Pamanky [sic] to hunt or otherwaies nor entertaine them in their howses aboue one night [without] a Certificate from

¹²² *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²³ Charles M. Andrews’s footnote in Berry and Moryson, “A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677,” 127.

¹²⁴ Berry and Moryson, “A True Narrative of the Late Rebellion in Virginia by the Royal Commissioners, 1677,” 127.

¹²⁵ H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 89.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

her . . . upon the penaltie of Thirty pownds of Tobacco for every night soe entertaining any of her Indians.”¹²⁹

Cockacoeske also asked that “her Indians may not bee abused by [the] *English*.”¹³⁰

This might have meant she asked that the Pamunkey not be enslaved. The Assembly offered the Pamunkey legal protection through a Justice of the Peace who could subpoena abusers to appear in “County Court.”¹³¹ Cockacoeske asked that the English not be permitted to demand so many of her men to aid them. This request addressed the act passed eight months earlier stating if Indians did not provide the English their warriors, they would be considered enemies. The Assembly agreed that no more than a third of Pamunkey warriors would serve in the the colony’s army at any one time.¹³² Cockacoeske also asked that these Pamunkey soldiers helping the English army be allowed to keep the loot they stole from enemy Indians.¹³³ The Assembly said yes to this, except that they could not keep horses, guns or ammunition.¹³⁴ Finally Cockacoeske entreated the Assembly for Pamunkey rights to hunt, fish and gather bark off the reservation land.¹³⁵ Here, she advocated not only for preservation of the men’s traditional role of fishing and hunting, but also for preservation of the women’s traditional role as home builders.

Certainly, when Cockacoeske returned home that winter she felt relieved. Though hunger existed on the reservation, spring was coming. The curtenemons were most delicious

¹²⁹ H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 89.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

in the spring and would provide sustenance.¹³⁶ With the new fishing, hunting and gathering rights, the Pamunkey could get the food they needed to live.¹³⁷ In fact, all the Acts passed on June 5, 1676, were revoked on February 20, 1677.¹³⁸ Cockacoeske's representing the Pamunkey here must have had something to do with this reversal.

Three months later, the English commissioners John Berry, Francis Moryson and Herbert Jefferies, who was the new governor, drew up The Treaty of Middle Plantation which in many ways matched Cockacoeske's earlier petitions. For example, both guaranteed land for the Pamunkey. Furthermore, the treaty stated that land would be provided for Indians who did not have land.¹³⁹ This may have pertained to the Indians from different nations that Cockacoeske brought to the treaty signing.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, the treaty stated that Englishmen could not encroach on Pamunkey lands and it acknowledged that this encroachment was a major cause of Bacon's Rebellion.¹⁴¹ The treaty addressed Cockacoeske's earlier petition "praying [that]Indians may not bee abused by [the] English."¹⁴² The treaty stated that the English could not imprison Indians without a warrant from the governor or a justice of the peace, keep Indians in their home, make servants of them without a governor's license, or sell Indians as slaves.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Curtenemons are edible seeds of the arum arrow plant that the Virginia Indians ate. "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," May 29, 1677, in *Samuel Wiseman's Book of Record* ed. Michael Leroy Oberg (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005), 136.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹³⁸ Mathew, "The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion, 1677," 32.

¹³⁹ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," May 29, 1677, in *Samuel Wiseman's Book of Record* ed. Michael Leroy Oberg (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005), art. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 12.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, art. 4.

¹⁴² H.R. McIlwaine and J.P. Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, 89.

¹⁴³ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 13, 15.

Cockacoeske's prayers on February 20, 1677, also secured other basic rights legalized in this treaty. It guaranteed Indian soldiers would be armed and paid; this sharply contrasts with the way her husband and his men had been treated in 1656. The treaty also stated that the English had to feed, lodge and respectfully treat Indians coming to town for government matters.¹⁴⁴ The treaty restored hunting, fishing and gathering rights, and it mentioned that Indians could go "'oystering."¹⁴⁵ These rights directly corresponded to Cockacoeske's petitions for Pamunkey to be able to hunt, fish and gather resources off the reservation.

The treaty also stipulated what Indians needed to do. They had to bring their conflicts to court, have one member of their tribe learn English to be the tribe's interpreter.¹⁴⁶ They had to pay a yearly tribute of twenty-three beaver skins to the Governor and a yearly rent of three Indian arrows.¹⁴⁷ They also needed to return English children and horses they had stolen.¹⁴⁸ Finally the treaty restored trade between the Pamunkey and the English.¹⁴⁹ Cockacoeske may have sought to represent other nations so she could control trade with the English.¹⁵⁰ If she was the gatekeeper of the Chesapeake Bay, then other Indian nations further north and west would have to go through the Pamunkey to trade with the English.¹⁵¹

On the trip to sign the treaty at Middle Plantation, now known as Williamsburg, Cockacoeske most likely canoed down the Pamunkey and York Rivers. Current Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown states that the trip was "a straight shot," and took no longer than a car

¹⁴⁴ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 17.

¹⁴⁵ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 7.

¹⁴⁶ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 5, 19.

¹⁴⁷ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 16, 2.

¹⁴⁸ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 20.

¹⁴⁹ "The Treaty of Middle Plantation," art. 21.

¹⁵⁰ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

drive would.¹⁵² Cockacoeske traveled with her son, and maybe with other members of the Pamunkey, as well as other Indian nations. The weather was probably pleasant, a May morning with a breeze blowing. At home, the Pamunkey women had planted their corn fields. As Cockacoeske paddled down the Pamunkey River, she reflected on all the events that had happened in the last year and all she had accomplished. When she got to Middle Plantation, she stepped onto the shore. She probably dressed elegantly; this was an important event. Her courage to stand up to the English the previous June and not give them all of her men as soldiers had paid off. She and the Pamunkey had earned the Englishmen's respect. She imagined the coming summer and fall. The Pamunkey would be able to eat. They would go dig oysters, gather curtenemons and bark. They would fish and hunt. As she signed the treaty, she felt happy. Cockacoeske signed and kissed the Treaty.¹⁵³

This treaty that Cockacoeske signed has held. Cockacoeske and her descendants continued to live on treaty lands with rights to fish, hunt and gather on other lands and they continue to live there today.

The Outcomes of her leadership; how the Pamunkey remember her, and Conclusion.

Cockacoeske knew what her purpose was and that was to make sure the Pamunkey survived. To do this she tried to reunite the Powhatan confederacy by signing for other tribes in the Treaty of Middle Plantation. Current Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown states that by bringing other tribes under her leadership she tried "setting her people to be up on top again," as the Pamunkey had traditionally been in 1607 when the English arrived to stay.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, February 2015.

¹⁵³ Rountree, *Pocahontas's People*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

With this arrangement, “other tribes would have paid tribute to us so it would have kept us in power,” Brown asserts.¹⁵⁵ He also states that by rebuilding the Powhatan confederacy, Cockacoeske would have made the Pamunkey “the lead trader.”¹⁵⁶ This was part of her responsibility as a *weroansqua* or chief.¹⁵⁷ Brown states that, “if you’re in power of the tribe, you’re responsible . . . to make sure you have the wealth and you want to give your people the wealth . . . similar with what people do today in terms of setting their kids up to be wealthy.”¹⁵⁸

The confederacy Cockacoeske tried to reunite did not last. Some subservient tribes under her jurisdiction refused to obey her or move into her village.¹⁵⁹ In accordance with the treaty’s statutes that Indians take their conflicts to English court, Cockacoeske reported that one of these tribes, the Chickahominys, were violent towards her and they likewise reported that she was violent towards them.¹⁶⁰ Displeasure amongst other subservient tribes ran rampant. During this time, Thomas Ludwell, the secretary of the colony of Virginia wrote that, “though we are confident the Queen of Pamunkey not mistreats or harms, yet most of the young men in several townes being dissatisfied, is contemptible at their new subjection to that Queen wch [sic] they say was consented to by . . . old men against their [the younger men’s] wills.”¹⁶¹ Furthermore, he stated, the young men “doe lie off in hiding in the woods

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ McCartney, 186.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 186.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 188.

and will not come in . . .,”¹⁶² Current Pamunkey Chief Kevin Brown states Ludwell’s letter may refer to the Chickahominy, who did not want to be “under her, so they left.”¹⁶³

Still, Cockacoeske did not waver in her purpose of keeping the Pamunkey and their lifeways alive. During Bacon’s Rebellion, she led the Pamunkey to safety. As Chief Kevin Brown states about Cockacoeske’s leadership at this time, “By organizing everyone together as a group and moving as a group and coming back as a group, she kept us together because a lot of other tribes are scattered.”¹⁶⁴ When the rebellion subsided, Cockacoeske reclaimed the Pamunkey ancestral lands and the Pamunkey’s rights to hunt, fish and gather food and other resources off the reservation, and ensured the Pamunkey were not made slaves. Her actions preserved the Pamunkey way of life.¹⁶⁵

Cockacoeske had faith. By signing the Treaty of Middle Plantation, she secured land for the Pamunkey. This kept the tribe together by providing a home for future generations. I had the honor of talking with current Chief Kevin Brown and Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold at the Pamunkey Museum on the Pamunkey Reservation in October 2014. Krigsvold told me that she was born on the Pamunkey Reservation, then moved off of it, but returned in 1990. Krigsvold states, “When I was a child, I did not see the importance of learning . . . the old ways. I didn’t think about it, but when I moved back I realized that the older ones were dying out and if we didn’t start teaching the younger ones how to make the pottery . . . it

¹⁶² Ibid., 188.

¹⁶³ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014. Chief Kevin Brown, interview by author, October 25, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Chief Kevin Brown, telephone interview by author, December 23, 2014.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Steven Grumet argues that although people think that the coastal Algonkian peoples (including the Pamunkey), succumbed to colonization, they, in fact, continued their lifeways. “Sunksquaws, Shamans, and Tradeswomen: Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian Women During the 17th and 18th Centuries,” 45.

would be a lost tradition.”¹⁶⁶ When she returned, her mother taught her how to make the traditional pottery, and Krigsvold, in turn, taught other Pamunkey women who moved back to the reservation to make this pottery.¹⁶⁷

When I first read about Cockacoeske in Edmund Morgan’s *American Slavery, American Freedom*, I was in awe of her presence. I was in awe of her having a voice with the Englishmen and telling them they could have only twelve of her men for the war. Then when I researched her, the research was almost too good to be true. The primary sources proved what I felt about her, my first impression of her, that she had effectively advocated for the Pamunkey.

Going to the Pamunkey Reservation was one of the biggest adventures of my life. The October morning was bright. There were green fields and more green fields. The road I drove along was narrow, black-topped, and without a yellow dividing line. Though I did not travel through the whole reservation, from what I saw, there were no advertisement signs, except wooden signs pointing the way to the Pamunkey Museum. There were no restaurants or businesses. It was quiet and clean and a vital breeze blew. Going to the museum and speaking to Chief Kevin Brown and Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold was awesome. It helped me to hear Krigsvold refer to Cockacoeske as a leader and not a queen. Krigsvold states, “She was a good leader for us.” I saw trust between Cockacoeske and her descendents and the continuity between 1677, when Cockacoeske signed the treaty, and this current time. Cockacoeske inspires me. She is a role model to me. As Krigsvold states, “She was the

¹⁶⁶ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, interview by author, October 25, 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

reason we have our reservation, because of her hard work. She was relentless. She didn't give up."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Joyce Pale Moon Krigsvold, telephone by author, February 2015.

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