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5 • *The Wampanoags*

THE WAMPANOAG people lived in settlements that stretched from southeastern Massachusetts (including Cape Cod, Nantucket Island, Martha's Vineyard, and the Elizabeth Islands) to portions of Rhode Island. According to Wampanoag tradition, Moshup, a benevolent giant, shaped the coastline by moving boulders to facilitate his whale hunting, guided the people to Martha's Vineyard, and protected them in myriad ways. Additional deities marked the Wampanoag spiritual landscape, not the least of whom was Hobbomok (or Cheepi), who provided visions for adolescent boys who were brave or strong enough to seek these visions from him.

By the time of permanent English settlement at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620, the Wampanoags, devastated by recent epidemics, were living in a loose confederacy under the control of the sachem Massasoit. Initially eager to forge an alliance with the newcomers to offset Narragansett aggression, Massasoit saw the uneasy collaboration with the Plymouth settlers become more and more tense, as English settlers continued to pour in and the Wampanoags were increasingly displaced from land that they considered their own. The alliance crumbled in 1675 under the Wampanoag sachem Metacomet (known as King Philip to the English), embroiling much of New England in a major confrontation involving the English settlers and nearly every Native community in the region. The Wampanoag people were split in their allegiances, and by the close of the war in 1676 many mainland Wampanoag communities were fragmented beyond recognition, bearing the full brunt of the vengeance of the English colonists, who ensured the outcome of the war through forced deportation, enslavement, and execution.

The Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard and its adjoining islands managed to escape this fate by achieving the extraordinary feat of remaining neutral in King Philip's War. Martha's Vineyard (or Noepe, as it was originally known by the Wampanoags), an island off the coast of Cape Cod that stretches approximately 100 square miles, was the homeland of a large segment of the Wampanoag people (and, after 1642, a number of white settlers). Although the Wampanoag community of Martha's Vineyard was in many ways typical of the colonial world, its relative isolation from the mainland of New England and its extended relationship with the Mayhew family marked its unique history.

Traditionally divided into four sachemships (Aquinnah, or Gay Head;

Takemmy, or West Tisbury; Nunnepog; and Chappaquiddick), the Martha's Vineyard Wampanoags had, by the early eighteenth century, established Christian communities throughout the island, most notably at Aquinnah (Gay Head) and at Okokammeh (Christiantown) in West Tisbury. Through the intervention of Mayhew family members, who had a close affiliation with missionary societies in England, Wampanoag converts to Christianity had some of the earliest access to literacy training—specifically literacy in the Wampanoag language. The first school was established in the winter of 1652, and by the time Experience Mayhew wrote *Indian Converts* in 1727, vernacular literacy rates were probably some of the highest in New England. Despite the Mayhew family's professed commitment to Native well-being, however, the Wampanoag people suffered extensive loss of both land and resources throughout the eighteenth century, as the population of the island shifted from Wampanoag to English colonial domination.

Today the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) is a federally recognized body. Active on Martha's Vineyard, it is committed to maintaining "original Wampanoag lifestyles and values, with a modern lifestyle layered upon the traditional."¹

Suggested Reading

- Mayhew, Experience. *Experience Mayhew's Indian Converts: A Cultural Edition*. Ed. Laura Arnold Leibman. Native Americans in the Northeast. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008.
- Silverman, David J. *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600–1871*. Studies in North American Indian History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gayhead website. Available at <http://www.wampanoagtribe.net/>. Accessed 10 May and 30 June 2006.

1. "Aquinnah Cultural Center."

Mittark's Will, 1681/1703

This document was written in Wampanoag before being translated into English by an unknown interpreter (probably Matthew or Experience Mayhew) and entered into the records of Dukes County (Martha's Vineyard) and the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1703. The English version included here is based on the Massachusetts Bay Colony copy that was edited and reprinted in Ives Goddard and Kathleen Bragdon's *Native Writings in Massachusetts*. The rendering included here, however, eliminates most of Goddard and Bragdon's editorial symbols and (in contrast to the Massachusetts Bay Colony version) uses the term *sachemship* rather than *chieftainship*, in accordance with the English translation contained in the Dukes County Registry of Deeds.² The once deteriorating manuscript copies of the deed in Dukes County have been professionally restored, a process that involved repairing, de-acidifying, cleaning, encapsulating the documents in mylar envelopes, and then rebinding them. This restoration process, coupled with the clear handwriting of the scribe, greatly facilitated use of the 1703 copies of Mittark's will, which are now merely tattered around the edges.

I am Muttaak, sachem of Gay Head and Nashaquitsa as far as Wanemessit.³ Know this all people. I muttaak and my chief men and my children and my people, these are our lands. forever we own them, and our posterity forever shall own them. I Muttaak and we the chief men, and with our children and all our common people present, have agreed that no one shall sell land. But if anyone larcenously sells land, you shall take back your land, because it is forever your possession. But if anyone does not keep this agreement, he shall fall and have nothing more of this land at Gay Head and Nashaquitsa at all

2. Dukes County Registry of Deeds, 1:349, Dukes County Courthouse.

3. Mittark was the sachem of Aquinnah, or Gay Head, from at least the early 1660s until his death in January 1683. His father, Nohtooktsact, a sachem from the Massachusetts Bay area, became the leader of the populous Aquinnah sachemship of Martha's Vineyard through unknown circumstances. During the early 1660s, after Mittark embraced Christianity, he was banished by his people to the eastern end of Martha's Vineyard, the center of Christian Indian life. Only three years later, he persuaded his people to host the Christian mission and returned to Aquinnah. During the next twenty years, he ranked among the most respected Christian Indian leaders on the island. He fathered at least three daughters (whose names are unknown) and a son, Joseph. See E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 21–23, 67, and M. Mayhew, *Conquests and Triumphs of Grace*, 47–48.

Nashaquitsa is a neck of land that connects the Aquinnah peninsula to Martha's Vineyard proper. Squibnocket Pond forms its southwestern border, while Nashaquitsa and Menemsha Ponds run along its northeastern end. The location of Wanemessit is uncertain.

forever. I Muttaak and we the chief men, and our posterity, say: And it shall be so forever. I Ummuttaak⁴ say this, and my chief men: if any of these sons of mine protects my sachemship, he shall forever be a sachem. But if any one of my sons does not protect my sachemship and sells it, he shall fall forever. And we chief men say this, and our sachem: if any of these sons of ours protects our sachemship, he shall forever be a chief man. But if any of our sons does not protect our sachemship and sells it, he shall fall forever. I Umattaag, sachem, say this and my chief men; that is our agreement. We say it before God. It shall be so forever.

I Umuttaag, this is my hand, on the date September 11, 1681.

We chief men say this say this [and] our sachem; this is our agreement. [We say it] before God. It shall be so forever. These are our hands.

I John Keeps⁵ am a witness and this is my hand concerning the agreement of Ummuttaak and his chief men of Gay Head and Nashaquitsa, all [and] both. I Puttukquannan⁶ am a witness. I witnessed this agreement of Ummuttaak and his chief men of Gay Head and Nashaquitsa, both. No one forever [shall] sell it; they [shall] keep it. I Puttakquannan, this is my hand.

I Sasauwapiinoo⁷ am a witness. I witnessed the agreement of Ummuttaak and his chief men of Gay Head and Nashaquitsa, all [and] both. I Sasauwapiinoo, by my hand.

Entered feb: 21st: 1709



4. For a discussion of the schwa *u*, see Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings*, 2:484.

5. The identity of John Keeps is uncertain. He might have been John Gibbs, the first Wampanoag pastor on the island of Nantucket. See Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1:567.

6. Little is known of Puttukquannan other than that he had rights to lands along the coastal ponds in the Takemmy sachemship of Martha's Vineyard (see Dukes County Registry of Deeds, 1:271, Dukes County Courthouse). He might have been Pattook, sachem of the Martha's Vineyard subregion of Chickemoo, who served as a magistrate in the Martha's Vineyard Christian Indian courts during the late seventeenth century.

7. The only other appearance of Sasauwapiinoo in the historical record was in 1719, when his grandson testified that he heard him discuss the birth order of two brothers (see Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings*, 1:213).

“We Chief Men Say This”

Wampanoag Memory, English Authority, and the Contest over Mittark’s Will

DAVID J. SILVERMAN

Referring to the document included here as Mittark’s Will is somewhat problematic, since there was disagreement among contemporaries about whether it truly belonged to Mittark (sachem of the Wampanoags of Aquinnah on Martha’s Vineyard during the late seventeenth century) and whether it qualified as a will. The Aquinnah Wampanoags presented the document to English authorities sometime around 1703, claiming that it had been drafted by Mittark in 1681, shortly before his death. In it, Mittark declares that if any of his successors as sachem attempts to sell Wampanoag land, that sale will be null and void and the seller will be deposed from office—or “fall forever,” according to Wampanoag metaphorical speech. Suffice it to say that this document was quite unlike the colonists’ formulaic wills, which distributed personal property and real estate, but its unorthodox format was hardly the substance of the controversy. The point of the document, not to mention the timing of its appearance, was to challenge the recent sale of the entire Aquinnah Wampanoag sachemship by Mittark’s son and successor, Joseph. Mittark’s will announced that, despite the fact that the Wampanoag people, in a region increasingly dominated by Englishmen, had become weakened, subjugated, and marginalized, they were not about to allow their territory to be seized with impunity. Since the Wampanoags could no longer redress their grievances through force, they would wield the pen in colonial courts and legislative chambers. For the moment, at least, they had turned literacy from the colonists’ advantage into their own.

The Wampanoags were desperate for the provisions of Mittark’s will to be fulfilled, for by the late seventeenth century English land expansion represented their greatest threat. Largely by hosting Christian missionaries from the Mayhew family (whose members ruled the English of Martha’s Vineyard) and then using their Christian status and contacts to maintain open political dialogue, the Vineyard Wampanoags (like their close kin on Cape Cod) had avoided hostilities with English settlers since the colonists’ arrival on the island in 1642. The Wampanoags’ efforts at peace were assisted by their vast numbers on the island—as late as the 1670s, there were as many as fifteen Vineyard Indians to every colonist—offsetting the colonists’ regional numerical advantage. Yet the balance of power had radically shifted by the turn of the century. Devastating losses suffered by mainland Wampanoags, Narragansetts, Nipmucs, and

other Indians during King Philip's War between 1675 and 1676 eliminated any legitimate threat of pan-Indian military resistance to colonization. Moreover, although during the conflict Martha's Vineyard Wampanoags dutifully cooperated with the English militia to guard the island, most colonists distrusted the Natives, viewing them as hostiles masquerading as Christians. As the colonists' hatred of the Indians increased, the Wampanoags' ability to contain it diminished. In March 1682, their staunchest English advocate, the missionary and chief English magistrate Thomas Mayhew Sr. died, ending forty years of uninterrupted rule on the island during which he had administered the Indian land market and the spread of English jurisdiction with uncommon (if not total) restraint. An epidemic in 1690 and several lesser outbreaks decimated the Native population, reducing it from approximately fifteen hundred in 1670 to some nine hundred in 1703. Combined with growing Native indebtedness to colonial merchants and submission to English courts, these developments inaugurated a rush of Indian land sales that had gutted Native communities on the eastern side of the island by the late seventeenth century.⁸

Aquinnah, widely held to be "the best tract of land on the Iseland and the Valluablest," was a prime target for land-hungry colonists and their leaders.⁹ In April 1685, Thomas Dongan, the royal governor of New York (which had included Martha's Vineyard since 1671), created the Manor of Martha's Vineyard on the site of what is now the town of Chilmark, right on the doorstep to Aquinnah. Next he appointed Matthew Mayhew as lord and, to circumvent restrictions against granting himself such privileges, had Mayhew sell him back the manor.¹⁰ Not until Dongan hired Mayhew to purchase Wampanoag lands to lease out to English tenants did this elaborate scheme come to a close. Yet this was just the beginning of the Indians' struggles. Within five years, the minor sachem John Philip had signed away his title to Squibnocket and Nomans Land Island, thereby surrounding Aquinnah with English claims.¹¹ Then, in May 1687, in a deed apparently signed in New York, the Aquinnah sachem, Joseph Mittark, granted all of his territory to Dongan in exchange for a mere £30.¹² Assuming that Joseph had the best of intentions, he may have believed that the sale would enlist New York to defend Aquinnah against the more numerous and less predictable colonists of the island (consistent with the Indian

8. This history is discussed at greater length in Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries* and "Deposing the Sachem."

9. Guildhall Library, New England Company Records, MSS, 7955/1, p. 37.

10. Dukes County Registry of Deeds, 1:241-47, Dukes County Courthouse; Guildhall Library, New England Company Records, MSS, 8003.

11. Dukes County Registry of Deeds, 1:126, 128, 137, Dukes County Courthouse.

12. *Ibid.*, 4:128; Guildhall Library, New England Company Records, MSS, 8004.

custom whereby weaker communities paid tribute to stronger communities in exchange for their protection). That, however, was not at all Dongan's intent. Dongan wanted to seize for his own profits Wampanoag land that the English judged as excess, land that the Wampanoags needed for hunting, gathering, fishing, and the like. Joseph's miscalculation had sprung a trap set by colonial grandees that threatened to ensnare all of his people's territory.

It would have been suicidal for the Wampanoags to take up arms in the face of this corrupt encroachment, but they had one other potent weapon in their arsenal: the printed word. Since the 1650s, young Wampanoags had been attending local mission schools, taught at first by Thomas Mayhew Jr. and his assistant, Peter Folger, and later by a cadre of educated Wampanoags, including Tackanash, Momonaquem, and Kequish. The schools followed a straightforward curriculum centered on the catechism, reading, and writing, mostly in the Wampanoag language but also, to a much lesser extent, in English. A series of Native-language texts published under the direction of the missionary John Eliot assisted in this work. The first volume of Eliot's Indian library was a primer or catechism, followed in 1655 by the books of Genesis and Matthew, in 1661 by fifteen hundred copies of the New Testament, and in 1663 by another fifteen hundred complete Bibles (or about one for every Christian Indian family in New England).¹³ New editions followed, with the addition of inspirational and instructional tracts such as Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, Bishop Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*, *The Logic Primer*, *The Day Which the Lord Hath Made*, and a variety of sermons. Handwritten manuscripts, including a Wampanoag catechism authored by Thomas Mayhew Sr., then copied by Native preachers, supplemented this printed material. Alphabetic literacy was entirely new to Wampanoags, but many embraced it with a passion. By 1698 an inspection of Christian Indian communities found, "Most of the Indians belonging to Martha's Vineyard (Chaubaqueduck [Chappaquiddick] excepted) are well instructed in reading."¹⁴ The Wampanoags' enthusiasm for formal education did not last indefinitely, however. Soon after this report was issued, the Indians' missionary sponsor, the New England Company, ceased its Native publications and began encouraging its teachers to carry on instruction solely in English, prompting many Indians to withdraw their children from school. Even so, as late as the 1720s, the missionary Experience Mayhew observed, "Considerable numbers of the Indians have learned to read and write," although "they have mostly done this after the rate that poor Men among the

13. Jill Lepore submits that a complete Native-language Bible was printed for every 2.5 praying Indians; however, she overstates her case, since her figures do not appear to include the three thousand or so Christian Wampanoags of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket (*Name of War*, 34–35).

14. Danforth and Grindal, "Account of an Indian Visitation," 132.

English are wont to do,” and “few of them [are] able to read and understand English Books in any measure well.”¹⁵ Mayhew overlooked the fact that the Wampanoags’ modest literacy was an achievement that no other Indian people could match and, more to the point, that it met their limited goals. Even Wampanoags with only a basic reading knowledge could engage with the documents of greatest concern to their communities—the Bible, religious tracts, deeds, wills, and court papers. The few fully literate Wampanoags—those who were capable of reading and writing, sometimes in both languages—could shoulder the responsibility of guarding their people against a colonial state whose official documents had become an indelible part of Native existence.

The Wampanoags brought Mittark’s will into public view with just such a defense in mind. They knew that despite the English theory that “wandering” Indians had no legitimate land claims apart from their planting fields, in practice colonists depended on Indian deeds to authenticate their titles and satisfy the Natives. Not just any Indian signature would do; colonists relied on the Indians’ collective memory to identify the appropriate seller or sellers.¹⁶ Most of this business took place informally and was not recorded. When an Englishman attempted to register an Indian deed long after it had purportedly been signed, however (a fairly common practice), he typically gathered Native testimony that the earlier transaction was valid and then had those who had given corroborating testimony place their signatures or marks on the deed.¹⁷ These documents contain some of the best available evidence about Natives’ community life, family ties, and territoriality during the colonial era. Often-times, they include such details as the genealogy of the grantor, the names of sachems who permitted the grantor’s family to use the land, the identity of witnesses who were present when the sachems made these decisions, rival claims to the land made by other Indians, and the names (and sometimes the status) of those who accepted the deed in question. This collective Indian memory and collective Indian decision making, put to paper, girded much of the colonists’ landed property.

A number of these deeds appear to contain transcriptions of the distinctive Native speech.¹⁸ One deed, a 1666 transaction from Plymouth Colony, cen-

15. E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, xxiii. See also idem, *Brief Account of the State of the Indians*, 4.

16. On English debates over the necessity of purchasing Indian lands, see Cushman, “Reasons and Considerations”; Shurtleff, *Records of the Governor*, 3:281–82; Eisinger, “Puritan Justification”; and Washburn, “Moral and Legal Justification.”

17. For examples of such documents, see Bangs, *Indian Deeds*, 277–78, 335–36, 353–56, 361–62, 448–49, 459, 464; Nahaton, Letter to Daniel Fisher; and Little, “Indian Land Deeds at Nantucket,” especially 63–65.

18. The following discussion owes a great deal to Little, “Indian Land Deeds at Nantucket,” and Bragdon, “Emphatical Speech and Great Action.”

ters on testimony from seven Indians that Watuchpoo and Sampson have the right to sell a parcel of land along the northwestern side of Buzzard's Bay. King Philip, the paramount Wampanoag sachem for whom the war of 1675 to 1676 was named, was one of the witnesses. His declaration reads:

Know all these present that Phillip have given power unto Watuchpoo and Sampson and their brethren To hold and make sale of to whom they will by my consent; and they shall not have it; without they be Willing to lett it goe; it shalbe soe by my consent; But without my Knowledge they cannot safely to: but with my consent there is none that can lay claime to that land which they have marked out; it is theirs for ever soe therefore none can safely purchase any otherwise but by Watachpoo and Sampson and their brethren.¹⁹

In all likelihood, Philip dictated this passage to the Indian witnesses and had it recorded on the spot, for his entry contains several hallmarks of Indian oratory. It repeats the same theme over and over again to give listeners the chance to commit it to memory, and it lacks the precise language of English legal documents; it assumes that once everyone has heard Philip say that Watuchpoo and Sampson alone have the right to this particular tract, there will be nothing left to parse over. If an Englishman had drawn up this document, he might have simply noted that Philip acknowledged the grantors' rights, but the deed was probably written by John Sassamon, one of the witnesses, who worked for Philip as an interpreter and scribe.²⁰ His job was to print Philip's words as close to verbatim as possible, and it appears that in this instance he did as he was asked.

Similarities between Mittark's will and the 1666 deed suggest that the will also recorded an actual speech. Both documents contain memory-aiding repetition of important points. They are rife with symbols of the speaker's elite status, such as vacillations between third- and first-person self-references and commands to the audience: "Know this," and "Know all these present." Both rely on chief men as witnesses for their authority. Writings from this period, including English writings, are not known for consistent spelling or grammar, but the Indians' variations appear conspicuously Native. Both documents contain short, easily memorized sentences, in contrast to the colonists' characteristic run-ons. The phonetic renderings of Mittark's name in the will (Muttaak; Ummuttaak; Umattaag) capture subtle pronunciations of the Wampanoag language that few Englishmen knew. Mittark's will, in short, was consistent with other colonial-era documents that were based on Native orations.

19. Bangs, *Indian Deeds*, 360–61.

20. On Sassamon, see Ronda and Ronda, "Death of John Saassamon," Lepore, *The Name of War*, 21–47.

The purpose of Mittark's will was as conventional as its form. In 1664 a mainland sachem named Josias Chickatabutt, or Wampatuck, set off a tract of land along the Titicut River for the enjoyment of a small community of Indians in perpetuity. He specified that if the community leader ever tried "to give sell or any way make over any part or parcell of ye said lands unto the English he or they that shall so doe shall by vertue of this prohibition forfeit and loose all his and their Interest in ye said lands and by vertue of this deed the said lands lost of [or] forfeited shall fall to and belong to the rest of ye then Tittecut Indians and their Indian heirs and Assigns for ever."²¹ A year later, two Cape Cod sachems formed a Christian Indian reserve called Mashpee that was never to be sold, and in 1669 the sachem Keteannummin of Takemmy on Martha's Vineyard followed suit in an area thereafter known as Christiantown.²² Around the same time, in Chappaquiddick, on the eastern end of Martha's Vineyard, the Chappaquiddick sachem, Pakeponesso, bypassed as heir his eldest son, Pecosh, in favor of a younger son, Seeknout, for fear that Pecosh "would sell land to the English."²³ Whoever was responsible for Mittark's will had a keen sense of Wampanoag precedents for defending the land.

The will alone was insufficient to challenge Dongan's title; it took the Aquinnah people's formation of a wall of agreement that the will had indeed been written in 1681. The version of the document entered into the public record was accompanied by the testimony of Sasauapinu, one of the original signers, "that this writing was made by Mattaak[,] witness my hand[,] this writing is indeed true septemr 11th: 1681." He was joined by "I Harry Cheife Magestrate Noshouohkamuck," the chief magistrate of the Martha's Vineyard territory of Nashuakemuck, who said that he had "heard Sauapinu and he says this writing was indeed made by old Muttaak[.]"²⁴ The Wampanoags' attempt to register the paper on the basis of this testimony some twenty years after the fact merely followed the colonists' example of entering deeds for Indian land years, even decades, after they had allegedly been signed. Given the colonists' standard and their dependence on Native memory to authenticate their own titles, how could they dismiss Mittark's land-sale ban?

Then again, how could they accept it? Taking the will to its logical conclusion would entail seizing Dongan's property, displacing colonial tenants, and establishing a precedent that might upset English property rights throughout the region. As if to prove the point, almost simultaneously Wampanoags from surrounding communities presented yellowed papers challenging English

21. Quoted in Bangs, *Indian Deeds*, 328–29.

22. Campisi, *Mashpee Indians*, 78; Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries*, 46–48.

23. Massachusetts State Archives, Suffolk Files, #12965, p. 104.

24. Massachusetts Archives, v. 31, p. 10.

rights at Squibnocket on Martha's Vineyard, Nomans Land Island, Nantucket, Naushon Island (of the Elizabeth Islands), and Assawompsett (in the mainland town of Middleboro).²⁵ The fact that the Wampanoags in these locations were linked by strong kin and church ties hinted that their documents were part of an organized protest against English expansion. Proof of collusion, however, was elusive.

In 1703, to the relief of colonial landowners, a committee appointed by Boston designed a foolproof way to dismiss the Indians' challenge. The committee contended that most of the Indians' papers had not "been proved in due Form of Law, nor drawn up in Form as is usual among the English." Regarding the Nantucket "will," they found "by the confession of the scribe that wrote it and by other witnesses, that they did not agree to the time nor place where it was writ . . . which gives us cause to believe that they were not true but forged and false." The committee also declared the Natives' writing for Squibnocket "forged and not true." Then outside pressure caused a hairline crack in Aquinnah's solidarity. Upon inquiry, "an Indian called Jonah Hossewit which seemed to be a sober honest man comes before the Committee and said that he wrote that writing long since Mattark's death and by the Testimony of sundry other Indians wee have good reason to thinke that said writing was forged and not true."²⁶

Was it, however? After all was said and done, Aquinnah's case still came down to the word of Jonah Hossueit (who in just a few years would emerge as a heterodox Baptist preacher) against that of his neighbors (the vast majority of whom remained Congregationalists).²⁷ It is possible that his confession was a false attack against religious opponents who had been telling the truth all along. Another scenario is that the Wampanoags drew up the document after Dongan's purchase but faithfully transcribed the proceedings of a 1681 council (like colonists who used oral accounts of Indian land genealogies to justify their own land titles). Or, perhaps, Aquinnah was shrewdly playing the colonists' old game of manipulating the printed word.²⁸ Whatever the case, the

25. M. Mayhew, Letter to Wait Winthrop; Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 72–73; Little, "Indian Horse Commons," and "Sachem Nickanoose and the Grass Contest," Parts I and II.

26. Massachusetts State Archives, Suffolk Files, 31:17. See also *ibid.*, 31:501b, 501c, 505, 505a. In 1712, the Nashuakemuck Wampanoags on Martha's Vineyard would try again to register an ancient will, this time attributed to the deceased sachem Chipnock, only to have it rejected on the grounds of its "being unintelligible and the witness thereto being long since deceased" (see Dukes County Courthouse, Dukes County Probate Records, 1:39, and the original Wampanoag-language document, "Chipnock's Will—1691. Disallowed 1712," Dukes County Courthouse, in a metal file labeled "Petitions: Common Pleas" among a bundle of papers listed as "Titles.")

27. See Thomas, *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 1:465, and Backus, *History of New England*, 1:438–39.

28. Daniel Mandell argues that there is "little doubt" that these were oral agreements later put to paper, but he does not adequately entertain the possibility of Native machination (*Behind the Frontier*, 72–73).

Indians could not win with Englishmen setting the rules. Boston's rejection of the Wampanoags' claims indicated that it would rely on Indian memory only when it suited colonial interests; English authorities were not about to let control of *their* written record slip into Native hands.²⁹

The Aquinnah Wampanoags did not regain written title to their land, but they continued to possess it physically. Their rally around Mittark's will frustrated Dongan into selling his rights to the missionary New England Company, which had been concerned that the praying Indians of Martha's Vineyard were about to be "scattered up and down the Continent, and returning to the barbarous Customes of their Ancestors."³⁰ From that point on, the Company, as landlord, often infuriated the Wampanoags by making such heavy-handed, paternalistic decisions as renting out a huge swath of Aquinnah to an English farmer to raise proceeds for Indian schools and poor relief. Nevertheless, from 1711 until the 1780s, the company effectively halted the sale of any Aquinnah land to outsiders, thus providing the Wampanoags with a safe haven when many neighboring Indian communities were on the verge of collapse. In this sense, Mittark's will had achieved something of a victory.

The Wampanoags had also demonstrated that the supposed division between literacy and orality, between written authority and community memory, was far more permeable than many colonists or their historians have presumed. Instead of being trapped between two diametrically opposed cultures, the Wampanoags melded their ways of speaking and remembering with the colonists' printed word until they had formed a distinctly Indian literacy. "Written talks," such as Mittark's will, could not replicate the moment of speech—the pitch, tone, and cadence of the speaker, his or her gestures and presence, the audience's responses; the ambiance of the setting—but they were reflective of many Wampanoag speech ways. Most important, they embodied the will of a people for whom few other options remained for asserting what had become a basic principle of their survival in colonial New England: "These are our lands. forever we own them, and our posterity forever shall own them." Wampanoags demanded that colonists pay attention to these words and confront their own hypocrisy in accepting Indian testimony only when it served colonial ends. We too should listen to the page.³¹



29. For more on this theme, see Barsh, "Behind Land Claims."

30. J. Ford, *Some Correspondence*, 94.

31. This line is a play on Murray and Rice, *Talking on the Page*.

The Hannit Family in Experience Mayhew's *Indian Converts*

The text from which these biographies are taken was published in 1727 by Experience Mayhew, a fourth-generation English missionary who lived on present-day Martha's Vineyard. Titled *Indian Converts: Or, Some Account of the Lives and Dying Speeches of a Considerable Number of the Christianized Indians of Martha's Vineyard in New England*, the book organized its biographies under four headings: "Indian Ministers," "Good Men," "Religious Women," and "Pious Children."

Chapter I. Example XVII

Mr. JAPHETH HANNIT, the third Pastor of the Indian Church on Martha's Vineyard, who died July 29, 1712.

Japheth Hannit³² was born in or about the Year 1638, in the Place now called Chilmark,³³ on Martha's Vineyard. His Father was an *Indian* of prime Quality there,³⁴ named *Pamchannit*; which Name being contracted into *Hannit* only, by leaving out the two first Syllables of it, became afterward the Sirname of his Son *Japheth*, and others of his Offspring: a thing very common among our *Indians*.

32. Japheth was the progenitor of an important Christian family on Martha's Vineyard: He was the father of Bethia Escohana (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 102–3), Jerusha Job(e) (wife of Job Soomannah [51–52, 105, 110–13]), Jedidah Hannit (232–34), Jeremiah Hannit (223–24), Joshua Hannit (224), and Hannah Tobe (wife of Elias Wauwompuque [70]). He was also the grandfather of Japheth Skuhwhannan (102–6) and Mehitable Keape, who kept school at Christiantown and whose house was used for church meetings (Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 1:126–27, 244, 338–39).

33. It was originally known as Nashaukemuck. *Nashowakemmuck* means "the half way house" (see "Annals of Chilmark" in Banks, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, II, 3). The town is in the southwestern part of the island.

34. More specifically, Japheth's father was a sachem, or traditional ruler. Although sachems ruled through consent, the position was usually inherited on the island, and nonruling members of royal families had a higher social status than other community members or resident nonmembers (Marten, *Wampanoags in the Seventeenth Century*, 19). The Hannit family provides one of the many examples from Martha's Vineyard of how sachems and royal families preserved their social status and power on the island by becoming ruling members of the Indian churches.

This *Pamchannit* and his Wife having buried their first five Children successively,³⁵ every one of them within ten Days of their Birth, notwithstanding all their Use of the *Pawwaws* and Medicines to preserve them, had a sixth (a Son) born to them, the same whom I am here speaking of, a few Years before the *English* first settled on the said *Vineyard*.

The Mother³⁶ being then greatly distressed with fear that she should lose this Child as she had done the former, and utterly despairing of any Help from such Means had been formerly try'd without any Success, as soon as she was able, which was within ten Days after his Birth, she with a sorrowful Heart took him up and went out into the Field, that she might there weep out her Sorrow. But while she was there musing on the Insufficiency of human Help, she found it powerfully suggested to her Mind, that there is one *Almighty God*³⁷ who is to be prayed to; that *this God* hath created all things that we see; and that the *God* who had given Being to herself and all other People, and had given her Child to her, was able to preserve and continue his Life.

On this she resolved that she would seek to God for that Mercy, and did accordingly; the Issue³⁸ was that her Child lived, and her Faith (such as it was) in him who had thus answered her Prayer, was wonderfully strengthened; and the Consideration of *God's Goodness* herein manifested to her, caused her to dedicate this Son of hers to the Service of that God who had thus preserved his Life: Of her doing of which she early informed him, and did, as far as as³⁹ she could, educate him accordingly. But this she did yet more vigorously, and to better Purpose prosecute, when a few Years after she was by the preaching of the Gospel, instructed in the way of Salvation by a Redeemer, and by the Grace of God enabled truly to believe in *Jesus Christ* our only Saviour.

Japheth's Father being also about this time converted, and so becoming a serious and godly Man, this [*sic*] his Son had the Advantage of a Christian Education, while he was but a Child, not only living in a Family where *God* was daily worshipped, but was himself taught to call on the Name of that God to whose Service he had been devoted: and when there was a School set up for the *Indians* on the Island in the Year 1651, his Father sent him to it, and he then

35. Epidemics were common on the island throughout the colonial period, and infant mortality rates were high. Kathleen Bragdon estimates that one of these epidemics killed 90 percent of the Algonquian population in New England between 1616 and 1619 (*Native People*, 26).

36. This was Wuttunohkomkooh, who died circa 1675 (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 135–37).

37. Wampanoags were not usually monotheistic before the arrival of the Puritans. They traditionally worship a variety of manitou (spirits, gods, nonhuman forces that permeate the world [Bragdon, *Native People*, 184–86]).

38. This is a pun: *Issue* means both “result” and “offspring.”

39. The repetition of the word *as* appears in the original.

learned to read both in the *English* and *Indian* Tongue, and also to write a very legible Hand, and was then also well instructed in his Catechism.⁴⁰

How he behaved himself while he was a Youth, I have no particular Account; however I never understood that he was viciously inclined.

After he was grown up, he marry'd a Daughter⁴¹ of a very godly Man, named *Keestumin*,⁴² whom I shall afterwards mention; and she prov'd a very pious Person, and did *him Good and not Evil all the Days of her Life*.⁴³

When the first *Indian* Church was here gathered in the Year 1670, our *Japheth* was, as he himself told me, in a most distressed Condition for not being of the number of them who first confederated to walk together as a Church of Christ, according to the Order of the Gospel: he on the *one hand* greatly lamented his not being of that happy number, as he esteemed them; and on the *other*, at the same time fear'd to offer himself to the Society of God's People, lest he should be unqualified for the Privileges to which they were admitted.

But tho' *Japheth* could not at this time enter into a solemn Covenant to serve the Lord, in an Attendance on all the Duties incumbent on particular Churches; yet it was not long after this, before he made a publick Profession of Repentance towards God,⁴⁴ and Faith towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and join'd as a Member in full Communion to the Church which he before long'd to be one of: in which Relation he from time to time behaved himself as became a good Christian.

He was not after this presently called to the Work of the Ministry, but was for a considerable time employed in Offices civil and military, being first made a *Captain* over a Company of his own *Nation*, and also a *Magistrate*⁴⁵ among

40. Catechism involves "sending out questions and listening for the echo, the answer that fixes the depth of knowledge and understanding" (Van Dyken, *Rediscovering Catechism*, 11). Although catechism was popularized in late antiquity by St. Augustine and Erasmus, during the Reformation Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others brought catechism back to the forefront as a means of educating and saving souls (*ibid.*, 14).

41. She was Sarah Hannit, nee Sarah Mensoo of Chappaquiddick (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 74, 166–70, 232).

42. He was the first deacon of the first Wampanoag-Puritan Church on the island, established in 1670. Mayhew describes him as a "Person of a very blameless Conversation, undoubted Piety, and an excellent Spirit" (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 74) Sarah Hannit was his only known child (*ibid.*, 87, 166).

43. This passage outlines the qualities of a good wife (Prov. 31:12).

44. For an example of a "profession" given by an Algonquian man at Natick, see Ponampam's Confession (Eliot, *Further Account*, 54–57).

45. To be an Indian magistrate entailed the power to enforce white colonial legislation on Native communities. Native magistrates, like their white counterparts, adjudicated suits for sums under twenty shillings and punished drunkenness, swearing, lying, theft, contempt toward ministers, and absence from church (Kawashima, *Puritan Justice and the Indian*, 29). In this sense magistrates usurped, at least in part, the power and prerogative of the sachems and *ahitaskoag* (principal men, nobles) to

them; in both which Places of Trust he behaved himself well, and to the Acceptation of both the *English* and *Indians*: and in the time of that War betwixt them, which began in the Year 1675, and was commonly call'd *Philip's War*,⁴⁶ good *Japheth* was very serviceable to both those of his *own Nation* and *ours* on this Island: for being firmly set, if possible, to maintain and preserve Peace betwixt the *English* and *Indians* here; and, being an *Indian* Captain, as has been already said, he was imployed by the *English* to observe and report how things went among the *Indians*: and to his Faithfulness in the Discharge of this Trust, I conceive that the Preservation of the Peace of our Island was very much owing, when the People on the Main were all in *War* and *Blood*.

Japheth's Fidelity to the *English* in this Affair gained him a high Esteem, and kind Treatment among them, he being generally look'd on as a godly and discreet Man by them; and being well accounted of among the *Indians* also, they not long after this called him to the Work of the Ministry among them. His Office of a Captain he now laid down, but that of a Magistrate he still sustain'd for some Years after he began to preach, none else being thought so fit for that Trust. The Place he preached at was that wherein he liv'd and dy'd, being join'd in that Work with his Uncle *Janawonit*,⁴⁷ before mentioned in Example the fifth.

Being called to the Work of the Ministry, he was very faithful and diligent in it, and was esteemed the best qualified of any *Indian* on the Island not yet in the Pastoral Office. He was therefore by *John Tackanash*⁴⁸ Pastor of the *Indian* Church here, in the time of his last Sickness, nominated as a fit Person to succeed him in the Office which he then expected a Discharge from; and the said *Tackanash* dying in *January* 1683–4, and being interred on the 23^d of the same Month, the pious *Japheth*, who much lamented his Death, made a grave Speech

govern and make decisions for the Wampanoag community. Some of the early Indian magistrates, like *Japheth*, came from noble families and hence may have seen the position of magistrate as a way of continuing their families' traditional role in island life. Others, however, came from less notable families.

46. King Philip's War took place from 1675 to 1676. Mayhew's emphasis on *Japheth's* loyalty to the British during this conflict stands in opposition to negative portraits of Christian Indians by Puritans with respect to the war, including criticism by Mary Rowlandson, who harps on the unregenerate conduct and propensity for violence among Indian converts (Rowlandson, "True History of the Captivity," 37). Many Indian converts were bitterly mistreated during the war: Some were imprisoned on Deer Island in Boston Harbor without proper food or shelter (Lepore, "When Deer Island," 16, 19).

47. *Janwannit* (who died in 1686) was formerly the minister at *Nashaukemuck* (Chilmark) and is the younger brother of *Japheth's* father, the sachem *Pamchannit* (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 20–21).

48. *John Tackanash* was the first teacher of the *Indian* Church and later a pastor (*ibid.*, 14–16). The office of teacher complemented that of minister: Teachers were to "attend to doctrine," administer the seals of covenant, and censure congregants (Cremin, *American Education*, 138). Some of the most famous ministers in New England, including *John Cotton*, held the office of teacher.

at his Funeral, some of the Heads whereof being by my Father, who heard part of it, preserved in Writing, and now before me, I shall here insert them, and they are as followeth.

We ought, *said he*, to be very thankful to God for sending the Gospel to us, who were in utter Blindness and Ignorance, both we and our Fathers. Our Fathers Fathers, and their Fathers, and we, were at that time utterly without any means whereby we might attain the Knowledge of the only true God. That People also which knew the Ways of God, were some thousands of Miles distant from us; some of whom, by reason of Difference among themselves about their Way, removed into this Land but it was God that sent them, that they might bring the Gospel to us. Therefore, I say, we have great reason to be thankful to God; and we have reason to be thankful to them also, for that they brought the Gospel to us: but most especially we ought to thank God for this, for tho they taught us, it was God that sent them, and made choice of them for this Work, of instructing us in the Ways of the Lord.

Before we knew God, when any Man dy'd, we said the Man is *dead*; neither thought we any thing further, but said he is *dead*, and mourned for him, and buried him: but now it is far otherwise; for now this good Man being dead, we have Hope towards God concerning him, believing that God hath received him into everlasting Rest.

Now therefore we ought to improve the Benefit which we have by the Gospel. And first, such of us as had like not to have received this Kindness, I mean such of us as were grown up when the Gospel came to us, so that it only found us in being, such are strongly obliged to improve the same, since they scarcely received it, or were in danger not to have enjoyed it. Secondly, There are others of us that have been born, under the Gospel, and we that were so, ought duly to improve the same, inasmuch as we have received so wonderful a Benefit. And now tho this Man that went before us, leading us in the Way of God according to the Gospel, be deceased, and helps us no more, yet his Doctrine remaineth still for us to improve; nor ought we to forget him, but should remember him by his Wife and Children, whom he hath left among us.

Thus far *Japheth's* Speech, which savoureth of the Piety of the Man by whom it was uttered.

Good *John Takanash* being thus laid in his Grave, Mr. *Japheth* was the next Spring called to succeed him in the same Place and Office; and in the Fulfilment of the Ministry thus committed to him, he continued about 28 Years, *viz.* till the Year 1712. He was faithful and diligent in the Work of God, unto which he was called, preaching the Word in season and out of season, reprovng, rebuking, and exhorting, with all Long-suffering and Doctrine, and used frequently to catechise the Children of his Flock in publick.

He maintained a good Discipline in the Church over which the Holy Ghost

had made him Overseer, knew, how to *have Compassion* on those whose Case called for it, and how to *save others with Fear*.⁴⁹ In difficult Cases that occurred, he was careful to take the best Advice he could get. He was not at all inclined to *lord it over his Flock*,⁵⁰ but willing in Meekness to instruct them. And when there was danger of Discord among his Brethren, he would not side with any Party of them, but would in such Case make most winning and obliging Speeches to them all, tending to accommodate the Matters about which they were ready to fall out; and so wonderful an Ability had he this way, that he seldom failed of the End he aimed at.

He frequently visited the Families under his Care and Charge, especially when they were under Affliction by Sickness, or otherwise; and in the Visits he made them, he usually entertained them with serious and profitable Discourses, and I have heard him tell how very advantageous that kind of Visits had proved to some of his People.

He very often performed the Work of an Evangelist, in carrying of the Gospel into other Places, and endeavouring to promote the Kingdom of Christ in those of his own Nation; and God gave considerable Success to his Endeavours to do Good in this Way.

Tho his sermons were not very accurate, yet were they very serious, and had a great deal of good Matter in them, and he seem'd to me to do best when he did not try to oblige himself to any strict Method in them.

In Prayer he was very fervent, frequently praying with much Enlargement and Affection. On Sacrament Days⁵¹ I have more especially observed that he has done so; and God did sometimes shew a gracious regard to the Petitions by this his Servant put up to him. One instance whereof has been formerly published in Dr. Mather's *History of New-England*,⁵² Book VI. pag. 63. But in nothing was he this way more highly favoured than in God's helping of him against a Temptation, with which for some time conflicting, and crying earnestly to God for Deliverance from it, he obtained the Mercy he sought to him for.

He was fully resolved that he and his House should serve the Lord with them therefore he constantly prayed, and frequently sang Praises to God: he also read the Holy Scriptures in his House, and often gave serious Exhortations to all that were about him.

He was much given to Hospitality:⁵³ for being frequently visited, both by

49. Jude 1:23.

50. 1 Pet. 5:3.

51. Sacrament refers to baptism and communion.

52. The reference is to Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*.

53. The meaning of *hospitality* was different in British and Algonquian society. At its most basic level, hospitality was, for Mayhew, a Christian virtue. Hospitality was also related to social hierarchies,

Neighbours and Strangers, they were always kindly and generously entertained in his House with the best he had, or could readily procure.

He well understood, and steadily adhered to the Truths of our holy Religion in which he had been instructed, and would not be *driven about by every Wind of Doctrine*.⁵⁴

One Instance of his Stability in the Truth, I think it may not be amiss here to give my Reader: A godly *Englishman*,⁵⁵ who had formerly been a Schoolmaster to the *Indians* here, and had taught *Japheth* and many others to read and write, and had also learned them their Catechisms, and instructed them in the Principles of Religion, having unhappily imbibed the Errors of the *Antipedobaptists*,⁵⁶ thought himself obliged to endeavour to bring Mr. *Japheth* over to his Persuasion: To this End he therefore visited him at his House, took much Pains to convince him that theirs was the right Way, and that ours of baptizing Infants, and sprinkling in Baptism, was very wrong: But none of the Arguments used by the Man, could convince *Japheth* of what they were brought to prove; at length being just about to go away, *Japheth* told him he would only say one thing more to him before he went.

You know, Sir, *said he*, that we *Indians* were all in Darkness and Ignorance before the *English* came among us, and instructed us, and that your self are one of those *English Men* by whom we have been taught and illuminated. You taught us to read, and instructed us in the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, which we now believe, and endeavour to conform our Practices to. And when, Sir, you thus instructed us, you told us, that it may be there would shortly false Teachers

however: For Algonquians, giving hospitality conferred status on the giver and receiver; British colonists, however, often understood the hospitality of Algonquians as conferring status on the receiver alone.

54. Eph. 4:14.

55. The reference is to Peter Folger (1617–1690), who, according to Mayhew, was a forerunner of the Baptist Church on the island.

56. The term means literally “against-infant-Baptism.” Members of this sect of Baptists were also called Anabaptists. Puritans throughout Massachusetts publicly beat, fined, and imprisoned Baptists. New England Baptists began as a splinter group that broke off from Roger Williams’s Congregational Church, but their theology and practice differed from Puritanism in several important ways (Schaff, *America*, 170). First, they believed in admitting unsaved persons into church membership. Second, Anabaptists, such as those on Martha’s Vineyard, believed in the complete separation of church and state and complete religious liberty, convictions that resulted in Williams’s banishment from Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636. To the Puritans, these were literally “damnable errors,” that is, mistakes that jeopardized the authority and holiness of the community. With this in mind, it becomes clearer why the schoolmaster Peter Folger was run off the island in 1662 when he began to preach these Anabaptist heresies (Silverman, “Conditions for Coexistence,” 119). In spite of these cautionary measures, the Baptist creed took hold on the island. The Wampanoag Baptist Church at Gay Head (now Aquinnah) is the oldest Native American Protestant church in continuous existence in British North America.

come among us, and endeavour to pervert us, or lead us off from our Belief of the things wherein we had been instructed; but you then advised us to take heed to our selves, and beware that we were not turned aside by such Teachers, so as to fall into the Errors into which they would lead us. And now, Sir, I find your Prediction true; for you your self are become one of these Teachers you cautioned us against: I am therefore fully resolved to take your good Counsel, and not believe you, but will continue stedfast in the Truths wherein you formerly instructed me.

This Speech of *Japheth's* put an End to the Disputation.

As for *Japheth's* Morals, he was generally and justly esteemed, as well by the *English* as *Indians*, a Person of a good Conversation: nor did he discover any such Infirmity in his Life, or Deportment in the World, as was inconsistent with such an Esteem; or which thro' Prayer, and the Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he did not obtain a compleat Victory over, being only privately admonished of a Failure, which some began to be offended at.

As he was generally by the *English* esteemed a truly godly Man, so being a Person of a very genteel and obliging Conversation, and one who went clean and neat in his Apparel, he was every where courteously received and entertained by them, the best Gentleman on the Island not scrupling to invite him to sit at their Tables with them;⁵⁷ and speaking *English* considerably well, Strangers that came to the Place took Delight in conversing with him. And once a Master of a Vessel⁵⁸ discoursing with him, on the Morrow after the *Sabbath*, facetiously asking him, whether he prayed for him yesterday or not? *Japheth* readily reply'd, *Sir, I prayed for all God's People, and if you be one of them, I consequently prayed for you.*

Persons have sometimes had Premonitions of their own Death, and something of this Nature our *Japheth* did experience, as he did in the time of his last Sickness declare, together with the Influence the same had on his Life; an Account of which, with some of his dying Speeches, &c. his honest Son in law, *Job Soomannah*,⁵⁹ who was frequently with him in his Sickness, having written

57. The status conferred to *Japheth* and to Wampanoag ministers on the island should be compared to a case mentioned in the diary of Samuel Sewall. Sewall recounts that when the Indian minister John Neesnummin visited him in Boston in 1708, Sewall could find no one willing to lodge Neesnummin: In part, colonists feared the "contagion" of housing an Indian, but they also feared the lowered status that would accompany hosting such an apparently undistinguished guest. Even the boardinghouses refused him, and Sewall was finally forced to lodge the minister in his study (Kawashima, *Puritan Justice and the Indian*, 108; Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, 2:212–13).

58. Vessel means "ship."

59. *Job Soomannah*, who died in 1718 (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 110–13), was the husband of *Jerusha Job(e)* (Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 126).

in *Indian*, communicated to me soon after *Japheth's Death*: An Extract of which Account I shall here in *English* insert, and it is as followeth.

He said, that about a Year before he was taken sick, he went out of his House, and walked alone in the Woods,⁶⁰ and there it was by God revealed to him, that he had but a little time to live in this World; and that being thereupon much concerned in his Mind, he did immediately set himself on doing all that he could to prepare for his approaching End, as taking it for a Truth that his End was now very near, and looking Day and Night for it: but he said, he still disliked⁶¹ himself, or reckoned that he came short.

Thus it was with him till *April the 2d, 1712*, which being a Day of Thanksgiving,⁶² he went and preached thereon; but as with his Wife he returned home in the Evening, before they had gotten to their House he felt a Pain in his Side, and was never able after this to go to God's House of Prayer, his Sickness gradually increasing on him from that time forward.

And having been sick about ten Weeks, he sent for the Brethren of the Church, and said to them as follows, *viz. That it did often distress him in his Heart, and cause him to weep, when he saw the miserable Estate of all the People by reason of their Sins; but especially how unapt the generality of the Church were to the Duties incumbent on them, and how often they did fall by reason of one kind of Infirmary or another, to which they were subject, tho he had very often instructed them in their Duty.*

I have, said he, often wished for your sakes, that you might still enjoy⁶³ me; but now I am willing to die: however, as to this, let the Will of God be done. But do you go on to pray to God, and worship him both stedfastly and fervently.

To his own Family, and such others as attended on him, he afterwards, not long before his Death, said, *Be not feeble in your Minds, I'm hitherto stedfastly*

60. For Algonquians, the woods were not an unusual venue for receiving visions or encountering the divine: As William Simmons notes, Native New Englanders often encountered manitou (spirits) "at night 'in the most hideous woods and swamps' in the shapes of Englishmen, Indians, animals, inanimate objects, and mythical creatures" (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes*, 39). Visions were also part of the popular religious practice that the colonists brought with them to New England (Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*, 86–87).

61. *Mislike* is defined as "to be displeased at; to disapprove of; to dislike" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

62. Feasts and thanksgiving days were important rituals for both the Wampanoags and the British colonists. As the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head points out, "In addition to daily thanks there have always been set times for celebration that coincided with changes of season and harvest times. Our New Year comes at the Spring planting time. Summer is celebrated with Strawberry Thanksgiving, at the time when the first wild berry ripens. Green Bean Harvest and Green Corn Harvest come at mid-summer. Cranberry Harvest celebrates the ripening of the last wild berry. A ceremony is held around the time of Winter solstice as well. The harvest celebrations are held after the work has been completed" ("Wampanoag Celebrations").

63. In this sense, *enjoy* means "to have the use or benefit of, have for one's lot" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

resolved that I will love the Lord my God.⁶⁴ I shall, said he, now quickly go my last Journey, as others have done before me. Now I shall quickly set out. Thus it has been wont to be, when a Thing has here no further Use to be made of it. But Oh, what sweet Melody is there now in Heaven! To his Son in law, the Writer hereof, he then said, My Son, be thou of good Courage, and fail not to lay hold of the heavenly Salvation, for the sake of the things of this World.⁶⁵ But as for me, said he, I need to have my Mind further strengthened, and encouraged; for I think I shall now quickly leave you.

The 28th of July 1712, was the last Day he lived in the World; for the Night following it, a little after Midnight, having desired those that were with him to praise God, by singing the 13th Psalm, and then by Prayer to commit both him and themselves to God, his Breath failed, and he resigned up his Spirit to God who gave it.

Thus far *Job Soomannah's* Memoirs of his good Father in law.

As I was well acquainted with *Japheth* in his Life, so I frequently visited him in the time of his last Sickness; and on the whole of my Acquaintance with him, I cannot but think, that he was a very serious and godly Man, and a Man of great Moderation and Prudence. His Discourse in the time of his last Sickness, when I was with him, was very pious and savoury.⁶⁶ He then expressed a humble Sense of the Sin of his Nature and Life, and yet his Hopes of eternal Salvation thro' the infinite Mercy of God, and Merits of his Son Jesus Christ. He then also expressed a Readiness and Willingness to resign himself and all that the [*sic*] had into the Hands of God, his faithful Creator, and merciful Redeemer. I remember also that he told me, that God had in the latter Part of his Life given him a more effectual Sense of the Evil of Sin, than formerly he had had; and that he had also enabled him with more Vigilance and Industry, to endeavour the Mortification of the Corruptions of his Heart.

Among other *Evidences* of the *real Piety* of this good Man, the Grief of his Heart for the Sins of his Countrymen, especially those who had been under his own Care and Charge, together with his Care and Concern for their Reformation, may justly be reckoned as *one*; for besides what of this Nature was discovered by him, in what is above-said, he a few Days before his Death, with his

64. The commandment "Love the Lord thy God" is invoked repeatedly in Deuteronomy and appears in Joshua as well.

65. One of the most important theological doctrines for Puritans was the "doctrine of weaned affections." This concept argued that the individual must learn to wean himself or herself away from earthly loves (husband, children, grandchildren, material possessions) and focus instead on God. Puritans feared that those who appreciated the sensual beauty and relationships of this world might forget the everlasting beauty of the world of the spirit (Tolles, "Of the Best Sort but Plain," 485).

66. *Savoury* is a (now obsolete) religious term meaning "full of spiritual 'savour'; spiritually delightful or edifying" or "having the savour of holiness; of saintly repute or memory" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

feeble and dying Hand wrote an affectionate Address to the People of his own Charge, which he desired might be communicated to them: which Writing of his being now by me, I shall render into *English*, and here insert, and with that conclude my Account of the Person that penned it. It is then as followeth:

Is it not a most desirable thing for Persons in this Life certainly to know, that they shall go to Heaven when they leave this World?

Therefore now take heed, and consider well what you do, and do not cast away such Hopes as these for nothing, nor for a little of the Pleasure of this World: for it is certain, that your carnal and worldly Actions can't give you Rest. Moreover, by these you do bring all sorts of Misery on your selves; yea, and not only so, but you do thereby trouble others also, so long as you remain unconverted.

Thus you trouble such as are Magistrates to rule and govern you, and by their penal Laws to punish you.

Next, you trouble such as are *Pastors* or *Ministers*, while you hate to hear, believe, and practice their Doctrine. While your Sin and Misery is great, their Trouble and Sorrow is so too here in this World.

You do also trouble the common People by your Sins, by bringing on them various Sickneses and pestilential Diseases, and all other divine Chastisements.

You do also hereby hinder and disturb the holy Peace of God's praying People among the Churches, and make those ashamed that are religious; and you who are still ungodly laugh at it.

Alas! Oh Lord, how very heavy is my Grief on the account hereof? seeing we now hear the Gospel preached to us, and have the Light of God's Word shining on us, and he in Peace giveth his *Sabbaths* to us.

God is constantly calling of us to Repentance, and has often repeated his Chastisements on us, by grievous Sickneses; but, this notwithstanding, how full of Wickedness has he seen all our Towns? for both Men and Women, young Men and Maids, do all delight in Sin, and do things therein greatly grievous.

People should all of them now forsake their Sins, and turn to God; and they should come to their Ministers, and make penitential Confessions of their Transgressions to them, and entreat them to pray to God for them: then would God forgive their Iniquities, and teach them to do that which is right all the Days of their Lives.

Then also would God teach them to know Jesus Christ, and believe in him: and then they should receive Remission of all their Sins, and should be caused to walk according to the Word of God to the End of their Lives. Whoso heareth this, Oh let it put him on Consideration! These are my last Words to you. Now fare you all well. *Amen*.

Chapter III. Example XV

SARAH, formerly the Wife of Master JAPHETH HANNIT, who died March 1716–17.

THE Sarah of whom I here speak, was the Daughter of a godly Man, named *Kestumin*,⁶⁷ mentioned in *Chap. I.* the same being afterwards Deacon⁶⁸ of the Church whereof good *Hiacoomes*⁶⁹ was Pastor. She was married to *Japheth* whilst she was but young, was a good Wife to him as long as he lived; and like another *Sarah*,⁷⁰ did reverence her Husband and obey him.

Tho she carried her self soberly and well when she was first married, yet she did not, until several Years after, make a publick and solemn Profession of Religion, and join as a Member in full Communion to the Church of Christ, whereof her own Husband became afterwards the Pastor.

Her Conversation was from first to last very blameless and exemplary: She never was, that I have heard of, guilty of any Fault that was just matter of Offence to *God's People*, from the time she first joined to the Church of Christ till she died. She was *chaste, a keeper at home, that minded her own Business*, and meddled not with what belong'd to others; and so no Busy-body, or Tale-bearer.⁷¹

She was one of those *wise Women that builded the House*, and not of the *foolish ones that plucked it down with their Hands*;⁷² for the fair and large *Wigwam*⁷³ wherein she with her Husband lived, was a great part of it her own Work; the *Matts*, or platted *Straw, Flags and Rushes* with which it was covered, being

67. E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 45, 74, 87.

68. Deacons were laymen who assisted the minister. An important social role of the deacon was to serve on the seating committee that mapped out the social hierarchy of the congregation: The closer the person sat to the minister, the higher his or her social (and presumably spiritual) status (Archer, *Fissures in the Rock*, 60). When Mayhew notes that someone was a selectman, town clerk, magistrate, or deacon, he is helping his readership mentally place the individual within the community's spiritual seating plan.

69. Hiacoomes was the first Christian Indian on Martha's Vineyard and later an important minister (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 1–12).

70. The reference is to Sarah, the biblical matriarch and wife of Abraham (Gen.).

71. Titus 2:5. Many Puritan conduct books cautioned people, particularly women, on the importance of governing the tongue.

72. Prov. 14:1.

73. The wigwam was the traditional Wampanoag house. Wampanoags in colonial New England tended to build two types of wigwams: a smaller "round house" (*puttuckakuan*), and a larger arbor-like "longhouse" (the *neesquittow*, or "house with two fires"). Thomas Mayhew Jr.'s description of the island wigwams explains that they are "made with small poles like an arbor covered with mats, and their fire is in the midst, over which they leave a place for the smoak to go out at" (Nanpashamet, "The Wetu"; J. F. Scott, *Early Colonial Houses*, 50–52). For a sketch by the Reverend Ezra Stiles of a typical eighteenth-century wigwam and a list of its contents, see Plane, *Colonial Intimacies*, 107–9.

wrought by her own Hands; and those of them that appeared within side the House, were neatly embroidered with the inner Barks of Walnut-Trees artificially softened, and dyed of several Colours for that end: so that the generality of *Indian* Houses were not so handsome as this was; neither was it inferior to those the chief Sachims lived in.

The House thus built was kept clean and neat, all thing [*sic*] in it being in their proper Places; the Clothing of the Family being also clean and whole, as by many has been observed: And in particular, this virtuous Woman's Husband was constantly so well clothed, and his Linen kept so clean and white, that he was always fit to go into the best Company, *and was known in the Gates when he sat amongst the Elders of his People.*⁷⁴

When these good People had much Company at their House, as being given to Hospitality they frequently had, they were entertained with the best, and that ordered after the best manner, which their Circumstances would allow of; the good Woman and her Daughters serving chearfully on such Occasions, and shewing no Discontent.

But the Prudence and Industry of this Woman, in ordering her outward Affairs, tho it were very commendable, yet was not the best part of her Character; for tho she served with *Martha*, yet was she not so careful and troubled about many things, as not with *Mary* to chuse the one thing needful, even that good Part not to be taken away from her.⁷⁵

We are told in the Description of a virtuous Woman, which we have in *Proverbs chap. 31. A Woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised*; and such a one, the *Sarah* of whom I here speak was justly thought to be, by him who from that Text preached her Funeral Sermon when she was interred.

Her sincere Piety has been in part discover'd, in what has been already said of her; but this will be yet more conspicuous in what may be further related concerning her.

She then carefully remembered the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,⁷⁶ constantly and seriously attending the Worship and Ordinances of *God* in his House on that Day.

She was careful to uphold the Worship of *God* in her Family, praying constantly her self when her Husband was absent, (as on necessary Occasions he often was) unless there was some other Person present for whom it might be

74. Prov. 31:23.

75. John 11:1-20; Luke 10:38-42. Cotton Mather references this allusion in the preface to his conduct book for women, *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*. Mather's conduct book provides one of the standards for female behavior to which the women in Mayhew's *Indian Converts* are held.

76. Exod. 20:8.

more proper; she also frequently retired to pray in secret, as was supposed by those that observed her.

Tho she could not read very well, yet she was not discourag'd from making the best use of Books she was capable of, reading frequently in such Books as she could make the most Advantage by: and Mr. Perkins's *six Principles of Religion*,⁷⁷ having been translated into the *Indian* Tongue, was what she took great delight in reading of.

She was careful to bring up her Children⁷⁸ in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, frequently gave them good Instructions, and would faithfully reprove them when they did amiss; and did also frequently exhort them to the great Duties of Religion, and particularly of that of secret Prayer to God.

She was taken sick of a Fever on the second Day of the Week, and died on the Saturday next following. She told her eldest Daughter⁷⁹ then with her, that she was apprehensive that the Sickness with which she was seiz'd would be her last; and withal, expressed such a Submission and Resignation to the Will of God with respect to her own Life, and all her temporal Concernments, as did become a true Saint.⁸⁰

She then also expressed her Desire to see and speak with her other two Daughters before she died; who being come, she expressed to them all a very deep Sense of the many Sins and Failures of her Life; but told them, that what she now most especially blamed her self for, was her not having taken so much Care for her eternal Good as she ought to have done: *for tho*, said she,

I have sometimes instructed and exhorted you, yet I should have done this more earnestly and pressingly than I have, and should even have commanded you to love and serve the Lord your God: But having fallen far short of my Duty herein in times past, I must now be the more earnest with you, being now about to leave the World and you.

And she did accordingly now, in the most affecting and pressing Language of a dying Mother, urge and command these her Children to love the Lord their God with all their Hearts and Souls, Mind and Strength;⁸¹ and did even

77. Perkins, *Foundation of Christian Religion*.

78. Her children are Bethia Escohana (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 102–3), Jerusha Job(e) (wife of Job Soomannah [51–52, 105, 110–13], Jedidah Hannit (232–34), Jeremiah Hannit (223–24), Joshua Hannit (224), and Hannah Tobe (wife of Elias Wauwompuque [70]). See also Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 126–27, 245, 338–39.

79. Bethia Escohana was her eldest daughter (E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 102–3; Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 126).

80. Puritans used the term *saint* to refer to one of God's elect rather than to refer to those officially canonized by the church.

81. Deut. 6:5.

intreat them to avoid and abstain from those Sins which she thought them most inclined to, and all other Sins whatsoever.

She had, in times past, frequently discoursed of the woful Condition, into which, by the Sin of our first Parents, Mankind were fallen;⁸² but now she seemed with more than ordinary Earnestness, to endeavour to affect her own Heart, and the Hearts of all about her, with the deepest Sense of the Guilt and Corruption whereinto all the Posterity of the first *Adam* had, by his Apostacy, been plunged; and among other things, she then said, that we who were created in the Image of God, or made like to him, did, by *Adam's* Sin and Fall, lose that *Image* with which we were indued,⁸³ and became like Devils for Wickedness.

This being said, she proceeded to magnify the Riches of God's Grace, in finding out and providing that Way for the Salvation of Sinners which is revealed in the Gospel, declaring in general Terms what that Way was, *viz.* that of Redemption by the Blood of *Christ*, the only Son of *God*.

She then declared, that as to her self she had hopes thro' the Mercy of God in *Jesus Christ*, the only Saviour of sinful Man, she should, notwithstanding all her Sin and Guilt, obtain everlasting Life and Happiness in the World to come; and having thus professed her own Hopes of everlasting Mercies, she exhorted all about her to have continual recourse to the Blood of *Christ* for cleansing from all Sin. She told them they could never wholly cease from committing Sin as long as they lived in this World, and therefore had need constantly to apply to the Blood of *Christ* for Pardon and Cleansing; and this she declared her own Intentions to do as long as her Life continued.

After she had thus discoursed, she said but little to any but God, to whom she was frequently heard pouring out her Soul; and she also desired some that came in to pray for her. The last Words that ever she was heard to say were, *O Lord I beseech thee to save my Soul.*

82. The doctrine of Original Sin was fundamental to New England theology and the Puritan missionary activities. As the New England primer put it, "In Adam's fall, we sinned all." Learning to overcome natural human depravity was the first step for every child and convert, whose entire life was expected to be a preparation for salvation (Cooke, "Theories of Education [XV]," 420). For Mayhew's own discussion of how man's spiritual death began with Adam, see E. Mayhew, *Grace Defended*, 5.

83. *Endue* (here spelled "indue") means "to possess or to be invested with a power or quality" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Chapter IV. Example VII

JEDIDAH HANNIT, who died in Chilmark October the 14th 1725,⁸⁴ being about seventeen Years old.

Jedidah Hannit, of whom I here speak, was a Daughter of Master Japheth Hannit, and Sarah his Wife. She was religiously educated while she was a Child; and it is very probable that the Spirit of God did make good Impression on her Soul some Years before that in which she died. She was very obedient to her Parents, was very apt and willing to learn her Catechism,⁸⁵ and delighted much in reading her Book.⁸⁶ Nor was she much inclined to go into such vain Company as many young People delight in: And her Friends sometimes found her praying in secret Places, where she intended that none but God should see or hear her.

In the Night on which she was taken with the Sickness whereof she died, she dreamed, as she in the time of her Sickness declared, that there was a very dark and dismal time shortly coming on the *Indian* Nation; with which Dream being much distressed, she waked out of her Sleep, and had such an Impression made on her Mind, that what she had so dreamed would come to pass, and of the Dreadfulness of the thing so apprehended, that she immediately prayed earnestly to God, that she might not live to see the thing feared, but that she might be removed out of the World before it came to pass. After this, having again fallen asleep, she after some time awaked very sick: and the Sickness whereof she was so seized, did in a few Days put an end to her Life.

The Distemper⁸⁷ with which she was thus taken being a Fever, with a Pain in her Side, was so very violent from the beginning of it, that she was neither able to say much to her Friends, or do much for the Safety or Welfare of her Soul, if that Work had not been done already by her. Her Illness still increasing, she in a little time appeared to be dying, and her Friends were grieved and surprized at what was coming so suddenly on them. But having lain for some little time wholly speechless, and to appearance senseless, and almost breath-

84. The death date of 1725 is clearly an error, since Japheth lived only until 29 July 1712 and Sarah until March 1716/17, yet Jedidah spoke to "her Father and Mother" when her death approached, and her father made a speech as Jedidah's end neared. I am grateful to my student Mackenzie Cole (Reed College, 2006) for pointing out this discrepancy.

85. Catechism was part of the child's (and convert's) daily life in Puritan New England. Even children of only four or five years were expected to repeat it precisely at home, and after the age of seven or eight, they were expected to repeat it in front of the entire congregation (P. Ford, *New England Primer*, 81–83; Axtell, *School upon a Hill*, 37–38).

86. The reference is to the Bible.

87. *Distemper* here means "disease."

less, she began to revive, breathed better, and was in a short time able to speak, and that sensibly, and remained so for several Hours together; nor was her Pain so violent as it had before been: Being thus revived, she said she seemed to her self to have been in a Dream; but whether she were so or not, she could not determine. However, she said she was going to a Place which she much desired to be at, and was exceedingly delighted with the thoughts of her going to it; but she then thought that her Brother-in-Law, naming him, came after her, and called her to come back again, telling her that her Father and Mother and other Friends would be exceedingly troubled, if she went away so suddenly and left them.

While she seemed to be dying, as is above related, her Brother-in-Law,⁸⁸ by whom she thought she had been called back from her Journey, as is above-said, went out of the House; and not long after him, her Father also; and the last mentioned of these Persons walking by the side of an Hedge-Fence, not far from the House, overheard the other, on the other side of the Hedge, pleading most earnestly with God, that his Sister might not be so suddenly taken away from her Friends, as to appearance she seemed likely to be: Soon after this, the Father of the Maid returning to the House, found her revived, as has been declared, and was told what she had said before he came in; and soon after her said Brother came in also, and to his great Comfort saw her, as one in a manner raised from the Dead.

But lest the Relations of this young Woman, and particularly her Brother-in-Law mentioned, should be too much transported at the sudden Alteration which they saw in her, Mr. *Japheth* made a very grave and seasonable Speech to them, telling them that they should by no means conclude from his Daughter's being thus revived, that God designed to recover her from this present Sickness; but think it sufficient, that God had so far heard Prayers for her, as not to take her so suddenly away as they feared he would have done, and had given her and them a further Opportunity to speak one to another before she died and left them: and to this purpose he more particularly addressed himself to his Son-in-Law, who had prayed for his Daughter, as has been declared.

However, the Maid thus far revived, had now a further Opportunity to look up to God for his Mercy, and let her Friends understand that she did not leave the World without committing the Care of her Soul to Jesus Christ, her only

88. This was probably Job Soomannah. The reference to her brother-in-law again points to the error in the Mayhew's death date for Jedidah, since all of Jedidah's known brothers-in-law died before 1723, and Jedidah's illness is said to have come upon her suddenly in 1725. Her known brothers-in-law are Job Soomannah (who died in 1718), the husband of Jerusha Job(e); Elias Able (who died in 1723), the husband of Hannah Tobe; and Nicodemos Skuhunnan (who died in 1710), the husband of Bethia Escohana (Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 126–27, 261).

Saviour. Having such Opportunity, she now declared, that she did no longer set her Mind upon any of her worldly Enjoyments, but was willing to die and leave them. *There is, said she, but one thing that I am now concerned about. I am now troubled for my Sins against my God, and my not keeping his Commandments as I ought to have done. I have made Promises to him, and have not duly performed them. I desire that God's People would pray to him for me.*

After this she said, *I believe in Jesus Christ, that he is my only Saviour; and then praying, called thus upon him, O my God, thou who takest away the Sins of the World, forgive my Sins, I beseech thee, and save my Soul for ever.*

She also took her leave of her Relations and others in Words to this Effect: *Farewel all ye my beloved Friends! Farewel all ye young People, fear ye God greatly, pray earnestly to him, sanctify his Sabbath, and be sober on that Day in his Fear.*

As for me, said she, my Days are cut off, and I groan by reason of the Pain which I endure; but I am willing to die, because I believe in Christ that he is my Salvation.



Tradition and Innovation in a Colonial Wampanoag Family from Martha's Vineyard

LAURA ARNOLD LEIBMAN

When Kenneth Lockridge wrote *Literacy in Colonial New England* in 1974, he felt relatively safe in his argument that signatures on wills reflected literacy rates.⁸⁹ Since the late 1980s, however, literacy has increasingly been used to mean cultural and moral literacy rather than just the ability to read and write: That is, literacy refers to a mastery of a “a supposed body of shared knowledge” as well as to the understanding of the character traits that were “preached, if not practiced.”⁹⁰ In the past, Experience Mayhew’s 1727 biographies of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Wampanoags on Martha’s Vineyard have been used to measure the degree to which Algonquians in colonial New England read and wrote.⁹¹ Mayhew’s *Indian Converts* is an equally important resource, however, for understanding Wampanoag cultural and moral literacy on Martha’s Vineyard. The Hannit family biographies from *Indian Converts* portray how Wampanoags and missionaries used reading, writing, cultural literacy, and moral literacy as both “a weapon and shield.”⁹²

89. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England*, 7.

90. Blot and Collins, *Literacy and Literacies*, 2.

91. Monaghan, “She Loved to Read Good Books,” 492–521.

92. Blot and Collins, *Literacy and Literacies*, 5–7, 122, 136.

Mayhew's biographies of the Hannit family represent a microcosm of Mayhew's larger work. Unlike previous records, Mayhew's *Indian Converts* not only accounts for the "Indian Ministers" and "Good Men" on the island but also contains extensive chapters on "Religious Women," and "Pious Children." Like the larger volume, the biographies of the Hannit family included here present the lives of four generations of Wampanoag converts. The selections are also representative of *Indian Converts* more generally in that they include not only translations of Wampanoag sermons, dying speeches, and testimonies but also information that Mayhew collected from English printed works and manuscripts. Mayhew's Wampanoag translations supplement the large range of archival materials authored or signed by Wampanoags on the island, such as wills, deeds, church records, and biblical marginalia. The Hannits, for example, appear numerous times in island deeds and court records.⁹³ One of the most important families on the island, the Hannits combined the authority of a "royal" lineage with leadership in a Wampanoag-led church. The focal point of the family is the patriarch, Japheth Hannit, an early and one of the most important ministers on the island. Japheth's biography reveals the importance of a dual lineage: He is the descendant of a petty sachem, but because of his parents' early emphasis on a Puritan education, he also emerges as a leader of his community. Like many prominent converts, Japheth secured his position in the Christian hierarchy by marrying the daughter of the first "Deacon of the Church whereof good *Hiacoomes* was Pastor": Sarah (née Sarah Mensoo of Chappaquiddick). Sarah, like many female converts, played a crucial role in educating her children about how to lead a Christian life. She appears to have been successful: Of her six known children, all (or their spouses) are mentioned as religious figures in *Indian Converts*.

The Hannit family's ability to read and write contributed to the leadership role of its members among the new Christian aristocracy. As Richard Blot and James Collins attest, literacy is linked to social power, whether that power is manifested by working within or against the colonial bureaucracy. Literacy is both "a weapon and shield."⁹⁴ Literacy, for example, allowed Wampanoags to manipulate the court system.⁹⁵ In the Hannit family, Japheth was able to read and write both English and Wampanoag; his wife, Sarah, and daughter Jedidah could read; and Japheth's son-in-law Job Soomannah could also read

93. For a list of documents about the Hannit family, see Pierce and Segel, *Wampanoag Genealogical History*, 126–27.

94. Blot and Collins, *Literacy and Literacies*, 5–7, 122, 136.

95. Silverman, "Conditions for Coexistence," 220–73.

and write.⁹⁶ The pattern of literacy within the family is typical of Wampanoag literacy rates and educational practices on Martha's Vineyard more generally. Schools such as the one attended by Japheth in 1651 educated children to read and write English and Wampanoag, with a clear emphasis on reading. As Jennifer Monaghan points out, of the 128 adults and children covered in *Indian Converts*, 60 are identified explicitly as being able to read and 9 as being able to write. Of the 9 who could write, 5 were men, 1 was a woman, and 3 were children.⁹⁷ *Indian Converts* also provides information about Mayhew's ability to read and write Wampanoag. Unlike most New England missionaries, Mayhew was not a dilettante in Wampanoag society: As a fourth-generation missionary on the island, Mayhew spoke Wampanoag fluently and had known most of his subjects or their families his entire life.

Schools such as the one attended by Japheth and his descendants not only taught pupils how to read and write but also strove to make them culturally and morally literate. Norman Earl Tanis provides a glimpse into John Eliot's curriculum, which was used throughout the "praying towns" of Massachusetts. Schools used a tutorial method to train future teachers. In addition to reading and writing, students were instructed in Calvinist theology, logic, carpentry, masonry, farming, and weaving, and children often worked as servants as part of their education. Pupils were encouraged to "attend the sessions of the Indian Magistrate so that they might learn about Massachusetts law." Advanced students might go on to study Greek and Latin.⁹⁸ The ultimate goal of learning to read and write was to reach salvation through a knowledge and acceptance of the Bible; thus, in Mayhew's version of Japheth's life, formal instruction is followed closely (textually if not temporally) by Japheth's marrying a pious woman, entering into "a solemn Covenant to serve the Lord," and serving on the side of the British during King Philip's War.⁹⁹ Books such as Experience Mayhew's *Indian Primer* (*Indiane primer asuh Negonneyeuuk* [1720]) and John Eliot's *Logic Primer* (1672) were effective only inasmuch as they helped pupils reach the divine by training the students' thinking to be in line with divine logic and Puritan theology. Puritan schools sought to familiarize students with not only the expectations of the genres in which they wrote but also their social standing in colonial society: The letters of Eleazar Wheelock's pupils, for ex-

96. Japheth's mother, Wuttununohkomkooh, and father, Pamchannit, are not explicitly mentioned as being able to read or write; this is not surprising, however, since they were already well into adulthood when the English arrived.

97. Monaghan, "She Loved to Read Good Books," 496, 502–3.

98. Tanis, "Education in John Eliot's Indian Utopias," 317.

99. E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 45–46.

ample, carefully mimic not only the English but also the style and content of eighteenth-century letter manuals. The students are artistically fluent in how to address social “superiors” and how to manipulate these “superiors” for their own benefit. The letters, which also repeatedly insist on the students’ awareness of Puritan codes of moral behavior, reveal Algonquians’ mastery of not only reading and writing but also the cultural and moral literacy of eighteenth-century New England.

Along with documents from Wheelock’s Indian school, Mayhew’s *Indian Converts* provides some of the best information we have about education and literacy among Algonquian women and children in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As in Wheelock’s school, both Wampanoag girls and Wampanoag boys were taught to read and write on Martha’s Vineyard. Although Mayhew comments that Sarah “could not read very well,” she still frequently read “such Books as she could make the most Advantage by: and Mr. Perkins’s six Principles of Religion, having been translated into the Indian Tongue, was what she took great delight in reading of.” Sarah was also literate in the Bible and in Puritan theology, as on her death bed she spoke about Original Sin as well as the “Riches of God’s Grace” and the possibility of “Redemption by the Blood of Christ, the only Son of God.” Her daughter Jedidah was even more proficient than her mother: She “was very apt and willing to learn her Catechism, and delighted much in reading her Book.” As her dying speech makes clear, not only had she memorized the catechism but she was also able to apply it to her own life.

The Wampanoag texts embedded in Mayhew’s biographies reveal a similar Algonquian mastery of the “master’s tools,” as well as a distinct rebellion against “the imposition of Western forms.”¹⁰⁰ Japheth’s sermon at the funeral of John Tackanash (January 1683/4) exposes Japheth’s manipulation of the Puritan funerary genre. Along with other Puritan burial practices, funeral sermons helped the mourner envision the deceased as part of a new community of the eternally saved. Like Japheth’s sermon, Puritan funerary sermons for leading members of the community emphasized the departed’s partaking of a new eternal life that ideally, one day, the mourner himself or herself would join. Puritans often contrasted the optimistic nature of their funerals with the loud, emotional mourning practices of Algonquians.¹⁰¹ Indeed funerary rites among the Native peoples of New England more often presented the dual nature of death as destructive and regenerative. This duality is reflected in the Massachusetts word for death: *Amit* was linked to the idea of exceeding, going beyond,

100. Collins and Blot, *Literacy and Literacies*, 122.

101. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England*, 233.

rotting, on one hand, and the idea of *m'anit*, a “sacred, spiritual force, god.” on the other.¹⁰² In contrast, Japheth’s sermon is almost unmitigatedly optimistic: Rather than emphasize loss, it harps on the eternal life gained by Tackanash and the salvation gained by the Wampanoags more generally through the arrival of the missionaries. Yet even by Puritan standards, Japheth’s sermon fails, perhaps, in an *excess* of optimism: Puritan funerary rites reflected the delicate Puritan balance between belief in salvation and damnation. The burials helped console the mourners with the knowledge that the deceased was in the hands of God¹⁰³ but also reminded the living of their own need to repent. At least in the section quoted by Mayhew, Japheth preaches atonement (Christ dies for sinners) rather than Calvinism’s *limited* atonement (Christ dies only for the elect). Indeed, this may be what Mayhew refers to when he says that Japheth’s “sermons were not very accurate.” We will probably never know whether Japheth’s theological adaptation of Calvinism was due to a misunderstanding or a willful reenvisioning of the main tenets of Calvinism. It is important to note that by the time of his own death, he has “mastered” the genre fully: In Japheth’s dying speech, recorded by his son-in-law Job Soomannah, he carefully balances belief in God and fear of damnation, and he urges his kin and friends to repent.

Just as Mayhew’s *Indian Converts* testifies to the Wampanoags’ cultural and moral literacy, it also testifies to Mayhew’s own literacy in the Wampanoag language and Wampanoag storytelling. Certainly Mayhew’s success as a missionary depended on his ability not only to speak the dialect of Massachusetts spoken on the island but also to refine previous translations of Puritan documents by Eliot in order to make them resonate with the community on Martha’s Vineyard. Perhaps more interesting, however, is Mayhew’s “literacy” within the Native American oral tradition, both in terms of language and the motifs, characters, events, and elements that characterized precontact genres. I have argued elsewhere that Roger Williams displayed a similar sort of literacy within the Narragansett oral tradition: Williams mastered not only stories from the oral tradition but also an oral style.¹⁰⁴ In the Spanish colonies, missionaries such as Fray Bernardino de Sahagún went to great lengths to become conversant with Native American genres. Scholars have tended to assume, however, that Puritans did not consciously adapt either their theology or style to meet Algonquian needs or to represent Algonquian converts. Indeed, in Mayhew’s account it is difficult to ascertain whether he includes the motifs, characters, events, and elements that characterized precontact genres intentionally or they

102. Trumbull, quoted in *ibid.*, 235.

103. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*, 100.

104. Arnold, “Cultures in Contact,” 15–58.

are inserted inadvertently when Mayhew translates written and oral testimony by Wampanoags.

Perhaps the most crucial of the Wampanoag oral genres for Mayhew's project is the *memorate*: a concrete account of a personal encounter with the supernatural.¹⁰⁵ The *memorate* shares some important features with the standard Puritan conversion narrative: Like conversion narratives, *memorates* can be told in the first person or retold by someone who was not involved in the incident.¹⁰⁶ Just as conversion narratives were often told to gain church membership, *memorates* by *pneise* and *powwows* were told as part of the rite of passage to become a spiritual leader, advisor, or practitioner.¹⁰⁷ Unlike conversion narratives or experiences, *memorates* frequently came in the form of a dream or vision, often deliberately induced through a "difficult ordeal" or "loss of sleep, fasting, and drinking mixtures that may have been hallucinogenic."¹⁰⁸ Also unlike Puritan conversion experiences, which involved an encounter with Jesus or God, the principal deity who appeared in Algonquian visions and dreams was Hobbamock (Chepi), "whose name was related to words for death, the deceased, and the cold northeast wind."¹⁰⁹ Hobbamock was also associated with night, black, and liminal spaces such as "hideous woods and swamps." He could appear "in the shapes of Englishmen, Indians, animals, inanimate objects, and mythical creatures."¹¹⁰ The conversion narratives told by Wampanoags in *Indian Converts* often reference the motifs, characters, events, and elements of the *memorate* tradition. For example, the conversion story told by Japheth's mother occurs in a liminal space and after a "difficult ordeal." Her granddaughter Jedidah continues this family visionary tradition. As Plane has argued about Mayhew's use of dream visions, the overlap between the *memorate* and conversion story provided a way for Wampanoags to express themselves that is both "fully Christian and fully native."¹¹¹ It is debatable to what extent Mayhew understood the Wampanoag resonances of these events; however, for those who wish to see Mayhew's use of Wampanoag tropes as conscious, we

105. William Simmons proposes that Wampanoag oral tradition can be divided into four genres: *memorate*, legend, myth, and folktale (*Spirit of the New England Tribes*, 6).

106. *Ibid.*

107. *Ibid.*, 39–41.

108. *Ibid.*, 39. Anne Marie Plane has called attention to the Wampanoag tradition of dream visions and dream interpretation embedded in Mayhew's text. As Plane observes, both Puritans and Wampanoags had a rich tradition of dream visions and dream interpretation, and both colonists and Wampanoags believed that dreams were a possible source of divine revelation and had a potential predictive significance ("Falling 'Into a Dreame,'" 86–87). Puritans were not as likely to try to induce their visions, however, or include them as part of the stories told to gain church membership.

109. Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes*, 39.

110. *Ibid.*

111. Plane, "Falling 'Into a Dreame,'" 96.

might point to his frequent disclaimers that he does not know how to interpret these events: This may be an indication that Mayhew recognizes when he has recorded something potentially unusual or suspect within the Puritan context.

Literacy has often been expanded to include inscriptions and nonalphabetic record-keeping systems. Mayhew includes references to such traditions and emphasizes their worth by showing how they mesh with Puritan values. For example, Japheth's wife, Sarah, is known for her ability to weave and decorate house "Matts." Although this form of "writing" was not found among Puritans, weaving was an important Wampanoag textual tradition. Wampanoag women were esteemed New England weavers: Up to and throughout the nineteenth century, Algonquian women were able to make a (sometimes precarious) living as itinerant craftspeople who produced a range of woven goods, from baskets to chair bottoms, brooms, and mats.¹¹² Although some of the women in *Indian Converts* make baskets to raise money for their impoverished neighbors, Sarah Hannit uses her weaving abilities to embellish and strengthen her home. Although Mayhew emphasizes that the "Matts" that Sarah plaits and embroiders made her wigwam one of the most handsome on the island, they also contributed to climate control in both winter and summer. Sarah's "Matts" probably also honored her family heritage: House mats were often "dyed in shades of red and black in traditional family designs that were handed down from one generation to the next," as Linda Coombs (associate director of the Wampanoag Indian Program at Plimouth Plantation) remarks.¹¹³ This tradition was carried on by Sarah's son-in-law Job Soomannah, who was also a weaver, an occupation that allowed him to provide "comfortably" for his family despite his physical disabilities.¹¹⁴

The Hannit family, like many of the families mentioned in *Indian Converts*, reflects the range of degrees of literacy found among Wampanoags on Martha's Vineyard. Not only did the ability to read and write vary between generations and between men and women; cultural and moral literacies varied as well. If literacy is associated with power, it was an ambiguous power in the Hannit family: With literacy came new ways to compose and recompose social and private identities to advance within a new society and to preserve old lifeways.



112. Wolverton, "A Precarious Living," 342.

113. Coombs, "Ancient Technology."

114. E. Mayhew, *Indian Converts*, 111.