



PHILLIP alias METACOMET of Pokanoket.

Engraved from the original as Published by Church.

PHILLIP alias METACOMET of Pokanoket.

Engraved from the original as Published by Church.

Wampanoag Grievances against the Colonists of New England

expressed before the outbreak of Metacom's War, 1675-1676, recorded in *A Relation of the Indian War, By Mr. Easton, of Rhode Island, 1675* [excerpts]

A true relation of what I know and of reports, and my understanding concerning the beginning and progress of the war now between the English and the Indians.

. . . for 40 years time,¹ reports and jealousies [suspicions] of war had been so very frequent that we did not think that now a war was breaking forth; but about a week before it did we had cause to think it would. Then to endeavor to prevent it, we sent a man to Philip [Metacom, leader of the Wampanoag] to say that if he would come to the ferry,² we would come over to speak with him. About four miles we had to come thither. . . Philip called his council and agreed to come to us; he came himself unarmed and about 40 of his men armed. Then 5³ of us went over; three were magistrates.

We sat very friendly together.⁴ We told him our business was to endeavor that they might not receive or do wrong. They said that was well — they had done no wrong, the English wronged

them. We said we knew — the English said the Indians wronged them and the Indians said the English wronged them, but our desire was the quarrel might rightly be decided in the best way, and not as dogs decided their quarrels. The Indians owned [agreed] that fighting was the worst way; then they propounded how right might take place, we said by arbitration. They said all English agreed against them, and so by arbitration [the Indians had received] much wrong, many miles square of land so taken from them; for English would have English arbitrators, and once they were persuaded to give in their arms [weapons], that thereby jealousy [suspicion] might be removed, and the English having their arms would not deliver them as they had promised, until they consented to pay a 100 pounds, and now [the Indians] had not so much land or money, that they were as good to be killed as to leave all their livelihood.⁵ We said they might choose an Indian king, and the English might choose the Governor of New York; that neither had cause to say either were parties in the difference. They said they had not heard of that way, and said we honestly spoke, so we were persuaded if that way had been tendered [offered] they would have accepted.

We did endeavor not to hear their complaints, and said it was not convenient for us now to consider of; but to endeavor to prevent war, we said to them when in war against the English blood was spilt that engaged all

Excerpted, images added, and some paragraphing, punctuation, and bracketed phrasing added by the National Humanities Center, 2006: www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm. In John Easton, *A Relation of the Indian War, by Easton, of Rhode Island, 1675*, ed. Paul Royster (electronic edition, University of Nebraska–Lincoln). Reproduced by permission. Full text at Digital Commons@UNL at digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/33/. Complete image credits at www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm.

¹ Forty years: since the defeat of the Pequot in 1637.

² Trip's Ferry. [Royster, ed., *A Relation of the Indian War*, footnote, p. 3]

³ The reading is probably 5, possibly 50. [Royster, p. 4]

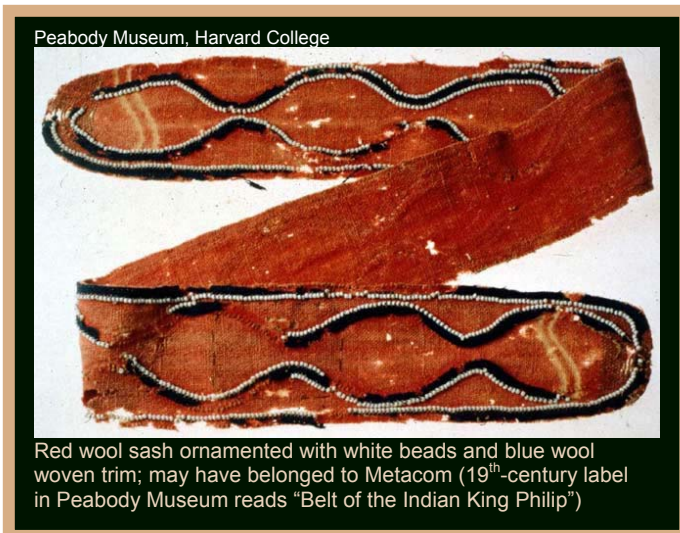
⁴ No other contemporary historian has given an account of this conference. Possibly no other colony could have secured a conference with Philip at this time, but Rhode Island had been more friendly with the Indians than had Massachusetts or Plymouth. [Royster, p. 4]

⁵ A reference to the treaty at Taunton [1671], which the Indians had interpreted as meaning a temporary surrender of arms brought to the meeting-place but which the English had construed as a permanent giving up of all arms in possession of the various tribes represented. On Philip's proposition a meeting of the New England Commissioners was held September 29, 1671, which resulted in the abandonment by the English of their construction of the treaty, conditional upon the payment by the Indians of £100 as stated in the text. This condition the Indians here declare to be impracticable. [Royster, p. 4]

Englishmen, for we were to be all under one king. We knew what their complaints would be, and in our colony had removed some of them . . . but Philip charged it to be dishonesty in us to put off the hearing of their complaints, and therefore we consented to hear them.

They said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing wrong; they said when the English first came, their king's father [Massasoit] was as a great man and the English as a little child. He constrained other Indians from wronging the English and gave them corn and showed them how to plant and was free to do them any good and had let them have a 100 times more land than now the king had for his own people. But their king's brother, when he was king, came miserably to die by being forced into court and, as they [the Indians] judged, poisoned.

And another grievance was if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian or their king when it pleased the English, that was sufficient.



Another grievance was when their kings sold land the English would say it was more than they agreed to and a writing must be proof against all them, and some of their [Indian] kings had done wrong to sell so much that he left his people none, and some being given to drunkenness, the English made them drunk and then cheated them in bargains, but now their kings were forewarned not to part with land for nothing in comparison to the value thereof. Now whomever the English had once owned for king or queen, they would later disinherit, and make another king that would give or sell them their land, that now they had no hopes left to keep any land.

Another grievance was that the English cattle and horses still increased so that when they

removed [the animals wandered] 30 miles from where the English had anything to do [owned land], they [Indians] could not keep their corn from being spoiled, they never being used to fence, and thought that when the English bought land of them they would have kept their cattle upon their own land.

Another grievance was that the English were so eager to sell the Indians liquors that most of the Indians spent all in drunkenness and then ravened upon the sober Indians and, they did believe, often did hurt the English cattle, and their kings could not prevent it.

We knew beforehand that these were their grand complaints, but then we only endeavored to persuade them that all complaints might be righted without war, but could get no other answer but that they had not heard of that way for the governor of New York and an Indian king to have the hearing of it. We had cause to think that had it been tendered [offered], it would have been accepted. We endeavored however that they should lay down their arms, for the English were too strong for them. They said, then the English should do to them as they [Indians] did when they were too strong for the English. So we departed without any discourteousness, and suddenly had a letter from Plymouth's Governor saying that they intended in arms to conform [subdue] Philip, but giving no information what it was that they required or what terms he refused to have their quarrel decided, and in a week's time after we had been with the Indians the war was thus begun. . . .

But I am confident it would be best for English and Indians that a peace were made upon honest terms for each to have a due propriety [land] and to enjoy it without oppression or usurpation by one to the other. But the England dare not trust the Indians' promises; neither the Indians to the English's promises; and each has great cause therefore.