**Thomas Harriot, The Algonquian Peoples of the Atlantic Coast (1588)**

*English cartographer and explorer Thomas Harriot (1560–1621) served as a navigator and mapmaker on Walter Raleigh's first voyage to Virginia in 1585. This account of the Algonquian peoples of what is now North Carolina's coast was published in London, two years after Harriot's return to England.*

*Of the nature and manners of the people*

 IT reftheth I fpeake a word or tow of the naturall inhabitants, their natures and maners, leaving large difcourfe thereof untill time more convenient hereafter: nowe onely so farre foorth, as that you may know, how that they in respect of troubling our inhabiting and planting, are not to be feared; but that they shall have cause both to feare and love vs, that shall inhabite with them. They are a people clothed with loofe mantles made of Deere skins, & aprons of the same rounde about their middles; all els naked; of such a difference of statures only as wee in England; having no edge tooles or wewapons of yron or steele to offend vs. with all, neither know they how to make any: those weapons y they have, are onlie bowes made of Witch hazle, & arrowes of reeds; flat edged truncheons also of wood about a yard long, neither have they anything to defed theselves but targets made of barks; and some armours of stickes wichered together with thread. Their townes are but small, & neere the sea coast but few, some containing but 10. Or 12. Houses: some 20. The greatest that we have seens have bene but of 30. Houses: if they be walled it is only done with barks of trees made faft to stakes, or els with poles onely fixed upright and close one by another.

*Of the new fond land of Virginia*

Their houses are made of small poles made faft at the tops in rounde forme after the maner is used in many arbories in our gardens of England, in most townes covered with barkes, and in some with artificiall mattes made of long rufhes; from the tops of the houses downe to the ground. The length of them is commonly double to the breadth, in some places they are but 12. and 16. yardes long, and in other some wee have seene of foure and twentie. In some places of the countrey one onely towne belongeth to the government of a Wiroans of chiefe Lorde; in other some two or three, in some fixe, eight, & more; the greatest Wiroans that yet we had dealing with had but eighteene townes in his government, and able to make not above seven or eight hundred fighting men at the most: The language of every governement is different from any other, and the farther they are distant the greater is the difference. Their maner of warees amongst themselves is either by sudden surprising one an other most comonly about the dawning of the day, or moone light; or els by ambushes, or some suttle devises: Set battels are very rare, except it fall out where there are many trees, where eyther part may have some hope of defence, after the deliverie of every arrow, in leaping behind some or other. If there fall out any warres between us & them, what their fight is likely to bee, we having advantages against them so many maner of waies, as by our discipline, our strange weapons and devises els; especially by ordinance; great and small, it may be easily imagined; by the experience we have had in some places, the turning up of the heeles against us in running away was their best defence.

 *A briefe and true report*

In respect of us they are a people poore, and for want of skill and judgement in the knowledge and use of our things, doe esteeme our trifles before thinges of greater value: Not withstanding in their proper manner considering the want of such meanes as we have, they seeme very ingenious; For although they have no such tooles, nor any such craftes, sciences and artes as wee; yet in those thinges they doe, they shewe excellencie of wit. An by howe much they upon due consideration shall finde our manner of knowledges and craftes to exceede theirs in perfection, and speed for doing or execution, by so much the more is it probable that they shoulde desire our friendships & love, and have the greater respect for pleasing and obeying us. Whereby may bee hoped if meanes of good government bee used, that they may in short time be brought to ciuilitie, and the imbracing of true religion. Some religion they have alreadie which although it be farre from the truth, yet beying as it is, there is hope it may bee the easier and sooner reformed. They beleeve that there are many Gods which they call Montoac, but of different fortes and degrees; one onely chiefe and great God, which hath bene from all eternitie. Who as they affirme when hee purposed to make the worlde, made first other goddes of a principall order to bee as meanes and instruments to bee used in the creation and government to follow; and after the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, as pettie goddes and the instruments of the other order more principall. Frft they say were made waters, out of which by the gods was made all diversitie of creatures that are visible or invisible. Of the new found land of Virginia For mankind they say a woman was made first, which by the woorking of one of the goddes, conceived and brought foorth children: An in such fort they say they had their beginning. But how manie yeeres or ages have passed since, they say they can make no relatio, having not letters nor other such meanes as we to keepe recordes of the particularities of times past, but onelie tradition from father to sonne. They thinke that all the gods are of humane shape, & therefore they represent them by images in the formes of men, which they call Kewafomok one alone is called Kewas; Them they place in houses appropriate or temples which they call Machicomuck; Where they woorship, praie, sing, and make manie times offerings unto them. In some Machicomuck we have seene but on Kewas, in some two, and in other some three; The common fort thinke them to be also gods. They beleeve also the immortalitie of the soule, that after this life as soone as the soule is departed from the bodie according to the workes it hath done, it is eyther carried to heaven the habitacle of gods, there to enjoy perpetuall blisse and happinesse, or els to a great pitte or hole, which they thinke to bee in the furthest partes of their part of the worlde towarde the sunne set, there to burne continually: the place they call Popoguffo. For the confirmation of this opinion, they tolde mee two stories of two men that had been lately dead and re againe, the one happened but few yeres before our comming into the countrey of a wicked man which having beene dead and buried, the next day the earth of the grave beeing seene to move, was taken up againe; Who made declaration where his soule had beene, that is to faie very neere entring into Popoguffo, had not one of the gods saved him & gave him leave to returne againe, and teach his friends what they should doe to avoid that terrible place of torment. The other happened in the same yeere wee were there, but in a towne that was threescore miles from us, and it was tolde mee for strange newes that one beeing dead, buried and taken up again as the first, showed that although his bodie had lien dead in the grave, yet his soule was alive, and had travailed farre in a long broade waie, on both sides whereof grewe most delicate and pleasaunt trees, bearing more rare and excellent fruites then ever hee had seene before or was able to expresse, and at length came to most brave and faire houses, neere which hee met his father, that had beene dead before, who gave him great charge to goe backe againe and show his friends what good they were to doe to enjoy the pleasures of that place, which then he had one he should after come againe. What subtilty soever be in the Wiroances and Priestes, this opinion worketh so much in manie of the common and simple sort of people that it maketh them have great respect to their Governours, and also great care what they do to avoid toment after death and to enjoy blisse; although notwithstanding there is punishment ordained for malefactours, as stealers, whoremoongers, and other sortes of wicked doers; some punished with death, some with forfeitures, some with beating, according to the greatnes of the factes. And this is the summe of their religio, which I learned by having special familiarity with some of their priestes. Wherein they were not so sure grounded, nor gave such credite to their traditions and stories but through conversing with us they were brought into great doubts of their owne, and no small admiration of ours, with earnest desire in many, to learne more than we had meanes for want of perfect utterance in their language to expresse. Most thinges they sawe with us, as Mathematicall instruments, sea compasses, the vertue of the loadstone in drawing yron, a perspective glasse whereby was shewed manie strange fightes, burning glasses, wildefire woorkes, gunnes, bookes, writing and reading, spring clocks that seeme to goe of themselves, and manie other thinges that wee had, were so strange unto them, and so farre exceeded their capacities to comprehend the reason and meanes how they should be made and done, that they thought they were rather the works of gods then of men, or at the least wife they had bin given and taught us of the gods. Which made manie of them to have such opinion of us, as that if they knew not the trueth of god and religion already, it was rather to be had from us, whom God so specially loved then from a people that were so simple as they found themselves to be in comparison of us. Whereupon greater credite was given unto that we spake of concerning such matters. Manie times and in every towne where I came, according as I was able, I made declaration of the contentes of the Bible; that therein was set foorth the true and onelie GOD, and his mightie woorkes, that therein was contayned the true doctrine of salvation through Christ, with manie particularities of Miracles and chiefe poyntes of religion, as I was able then to utter, and thought fitte for the time. And although I told them the booke materially & of itself was not of anie such vertue, as I thought they did conceive, but onely the doctrine therein contained; yet would many be glad to touch it, to embrace it, to kisse it, to hold it to their brests and heades, and stroke over all their bodie with it; to shewe their hungrie desire of that knowledge which was spoken of. The Wiroans with whom we dwelt called Wingina, and many of his people would be glad many times to be with us at our praiers, and many times call upon us both in his owne towne, as also in others whither he sometimes accompanied us, to pray and sing Psalmes; hoping thereby to bee partaker of the same effectes which wee by that meanes also expected. Twise this Wiroans was so grievously sicke that he was like to die, and as hee laie languishing, doubting of anie helpe by his owne priestes, and thinking he was in such danger for offending us and thereby our god, sent for some of us to praie and bee a meanes to our God that it would please him either that he might live or after death dwell with him in blisse, so likewise were the requestes of manie others in the like case. On a time also when their corne began to wither by reason of a drouth which happened extraordinarily, fearing that it had come to passe by reason that in some thing they had displeased us, many woulde come to us & desire us to praie to our God of England, that he would preserve their corne, promising that when it was ripe we also should be partakers of the fruite. There could at no time happen any strange sicknesse, losses, hurtes, or any other crosse unto them, but that they would impute to us the cause or meanes therof for offending or not pleasing us. One other rare and strange accident, leaving others, will I mention before I ende, which mooved the whole countrey that either knew or hearde of us, to have us in wonderfull admiration. There was no towne where we had nay subtile devise practised against us, we leaving it unpunished or not revenged (because wee fought by all meanes possible to win them by gentlenesse) but that within a few dayes after our departure from everie such towne, the people began to die very fast, and many in short space; in some townes about twentie, in some fourtie, in some sixtie, and in one sixe score, which in trueth was very manie in respect of their numbers. This happened in no place that wee coulde learne but where wee had bene, where they used some practise against us, and after such time; The disease also so strange, that they neither knew what it was, not how to cure it; the like by report of the oldest men in the countrey never happened before, time our of minde. A thing specially observed by us as also by the naturall inhabitants themselves. Insomuch that when some of the inhabitantes which were our friends & especially the Wiroans Wingina had observed such effects in foure or five towns to follow their wicked practices, they were perswaded that it was the worke of our God through our meanes, and that wee by him might kil and slaie whom wee would without weapons and not come neere them. And thereupon when it had happened that they had understanding that any of their enemies had abused us in our journeyes, hearing that wee had wrought no revenge with our weapons, & fearing upon some cause the matter should so rest; did come and intreate us that we woulde bee a meanes to our God that they as others that had dealt ill with us might in like sort die; alleaging howe much it would be for our credite and profite as also theirs and hoping furthermore that we would do so much at their requests in respect of the friendship we professe them. Whose entreaties although wee shewed that they were ungodlie, affirming that our God would not subject himselfe to anie such praiers and requestes of men that indeede all thinges have beene and were to be done according to his good pleasure as he had ordained: and that we to shew our selves his true servants ought rather to make petition for the contrarie, that they with them might live together with us, bee made partakers of his truth & serve him in righteousnes; but notwithstanding in such sort, that wee referre that as all other thinges, to bee done according to his divine will & pleasure, and as by his wisedome he had ordained to be best. Yet because the effect fell out so sodainly and shortly after according to their desires, they thought neverthelesse it came to passe by our meanes, and that we in using such speeches unto them did but dissemble the matter, and therefore came unto us to give us thankes in their manner that although wee satisfied them not in promise, yet in deedes and effect we had fulfilled their desires. This marvelous accident in all the countrie wrought so strange opinions of us, that some people could not tel whether to think us gods or men, and the rather because that all the space of their sicknesse, there was no man of ours knowne to die, or that was specially sicke; they noted also that we had no women amongst us, neither that we did care for any of theirs. Some therefore were of opinion that wee were not borne or women, and therefore not mortall, but that wee were men of an old generation many yeeres past then risen againe in immortalitie. Some woulde likewise seeme to prophesie that there were more of our generation yet to come, to kill theirs and take their places, as some thought the purpose was by that which was already done. Those that were immediately to come after us they imagined to be in the aire yet invisible & without bodies & that they by our intreaty & for the love of us did make the people to die in that sort as they did by shooting invisible bullets into them. To confirme this opinion their phisitions to excuse their ignorance in curing the disease, would not be ashamed to say, but earnestly make the simple people beleve, that the strings of blood that they sucked out the sicke bodies, were the strings where with all the invisible bullets were tied and cast. Some also thought that we shot them ourselves out of our pieces from the place where we dwelt, and killed the people in any such towne that had offended us as we lifted how farre distant from us foever it were. And other some saide that it was the speciall woorke of God for our sakes, as wee ourselves have cause in some sorte to thinke no lessse, whatsoever some doe or maie imagine to the contrarie, specially some Astrologers knowing of the Eclipse of the Sunne which wee saw the same yeere before in our voyage thytherward, which unto them appeared very terrible. And also of the Comet which beganne to apppeare but a few daies before the beginning of the said sicknesse. But to conclude them from being the special causes of so speciall and accident, there are farther reasons then I thinke fit as this present to bee alleadged. These their opinions I have set downe the more at large that it may appeare unto you that here is good hope they may be brought through discreet dealing and governement to the imbracing of the trueth, and consequently to honour, obey, feare, and love us. And although some of our companie towardes the ende of the yeare, shewed themselves too fierce, in slaying some the people, in some towns, upon causes that on our part, might easily enough have been borne withall: yet notwithstanding because it was on their part justly deserved, the alteration of their opinions generally & for the most part concerning us is the lesse to bee doubted. And whatsoever els they may be, by carefulnesse of ourselves neede nothing at all to be feared. The best neverthelesse in this as in all actions besides is to be endevoured and hoped, & of the worst that may happen notice to bee taken with consideration, and as much as may be eschewed. Now I have as I hope made relation not of so fewe and smal things but that the countrey of men that are indifferent & wel disposed maie be sufficiently liked: If there were no more knowen then I have mentioned, which doubtlesse and in great reason is nothing to that which remaineth to bee discovered, neither the soile, nor commodities. As we have reason so to gather by the difference we found in our travails, for although all which I have before spoke of have bin discovered & experimented not far fro the sea coast where was our abode & most of our travailing yet sometimes as we made our journeies farther into the maine and countrey; we found the foyle to bee fatter; the trees greater and the growe thinner.

**Document Analysis**

1. What are Harriot’s thoughts about the behavior of the Algonquian people and their willingness to accept the English colonists?

2. Why does Harriot believe that the Algonquian peoples will be easily civilized and open to conversion to Christianity?

3. In general, what does Harriot see as the potential for colonizing the land and peoples that he observed? What specific things led him to this opinion?