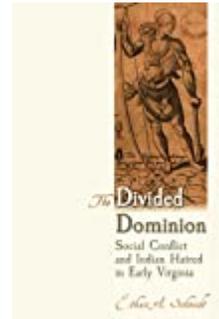




Ethan A. Schmidt. *The Divided Dominion: Social Conflict and Indian Hatred in Early Virginia.* Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015. xvi + 208 pp. \$39.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-60732-307-5; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-60732-524-6.



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Published on H-AmIndian (May, 2016)

Commissioned by F. Evan Nooe (University of North Carolina-Charlotte)

Violence and Hatred in Early Virginia

In *The Divided Dominion*, Ethan A. Schmidt provides an analysis of Bacon's Rebellion, one of the most deeply studied topics in Virginia history and American colonial history. Building on the work of Edmund Morgan, Kathleen Brown, James Rice, and Anthony Parent, among others, Schmidt follows class conflict between elite planters and lower-class colonists throughout the seventeenth century as the colony sought to subdue the powerful Powhatan chiefdom and expand tobacco plantations. Throughout these tumultuous settlement years, impoverished colonists were periodically on the verge of uniting against the elite who used their positions in government to halt the economic advancement of the lower class. However, even as wealthy planters enacted harsh discipline against newly arrived indentured servants and implemented policies designed to supplement their own wealth, it was not until Nathaniel Bacon called for the annihilation of all Indians that they were able to unite together in a common cause against Governor William Berkeley in 1676. The intention in his book, Schmidt proposes, is not to explain the results of Bacon's Rebellion in

terms of the rise of race-based slavery in Virginia as Morgan did in *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975) but to locate the causes of the event in the fraught relationship between colonists and Indians over the course of the seventeenth century.

The book opens with two chapters on early Powhatan-colonial relations spanning from John Smith's rocky encounter with Powhatan to the breakdown of peace negotiations and the end of the first Anglo-Powhatan war in 1614. These moments of strife as Indians and colonists attempted to impose their own diplomatic and political customs on one another not only ended in violence but also planted the seeds for rebellion in the 1670s by creating a sense of hatred against Indians on the part of lower-class soldiers who fought in military campaigns. Though leaders like Thomas West tried to reign in violence, when it did not suit their military strategies they faced a quandary. For the upper classes to successfully fight Indians, they had to stoke Indian hatred to the point that their fellow Virginians became almost impossible to control (p. 55). The strategies of

the planter elite to cut off indentured laborers and other newly arrived immigrants from economic opportunity are the focus of the next two chapters, which trace government reforms and the gruesome disciplinary action directed at indentured servants who dared to deprive their owners of their labor. In this period, wealth was defined by the amount of tobacco produced, which was dependent on how many laborers one owned. Because the Virginia Company was determined to avoid levying taxes on settlers, they offered laborers and land to those who served in government as payment for their services. Instead of easing the burden on the lower classes, this solidified the power of the governing elite who used their positions to generate still more land and labor for themselves. Schmidt points out that out of the fifteen Virginians who owned ten or more laborers in the 1620s eight of these men rotated on and off the governor's council in the period. Three became governor themselves. For poor colonists, often the only hope of advancement in the colony was the promise of Indian land in return for help with military campaigns against Indians.

In his final chapters, Schmidt turns to the shifting popularity of Governor Berkeley and the governor's difficulties after his return to the governor's seat after the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660. By and large Berkeley managed to satisfy his constituency until his Indian policy became too forgiving in the 1670s and he took personal control of the Indian trade. The final straw was his refusal to acquiesce to Bacon's demands to deny tributary Indians status as subjects of the king. When Bacon attacked nearby Susquehannock and Occaneechee Indians, colonists were drawn to the cause because of his eliminatory rhetoric and the possibility of acquiring land. Violence continued in 1676 against colonists and Indians alike. But Bacon's death from dysentery and the arrival of English forces brought the chaos to an end and kept many of the same leaders in charge of the colony. However, the rebellion did give the advisors of Charles II the excuse they needed to intervene in colonial affairs and the elite became slightly more responsive to the public at large in the eighteenth century. In the end, Bacon's Rebellion did alter the fate of poor Virginians to an extent, but it also helped to cement policies geared toward the cultural and physical elimination

of Indian people. This is a reality that Native Virginians still must grapple with today.

The extensive abuses of the elite planter class that Schmidt points to will not surprise specialists in early Virginia history or those who have read Anthony Parent's *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia 1660-1740* (2003). The notion that Indian hatred brought colonists together under Bacon's banner in the 1670s is also not new. However, Schmidt shows us how constant Indian hatred was across the seventeenth century. This is a strength in the book. Still, we might ask for a more precise definition of this hatred. Was it based in racial difference, fear of Indian retaliation, or religious fanaticism? Were these feelings directed at all Indian nations or just some? The question of elimination and Indian slavery in Virginia is also relevant here. Did colonists truly want to eliminate Indians as Schmidt suggests or use them for labor, which was the key to garnering prosperity in this burgeoning tobacco colony? After all, Bacon's attack on the Pamunkey leader Cockacoeske in the fall of 1676 resulted in the capture of the female leader and the enslavement of what was left of her protectors. Also absent is discussion of how Afro-Virginians reacted to events.

Finally, scholars of Native American history should be aware of some slippages in the text that reveal a lack of complexity with regard to cultural difference. For instance, as Schmidt discusses Powhatan's rise to power he contrasts diplomatic, spiritual, military, and economic power with traditional Algonquian practices of consent, custom, and kinship (p. 29). We might ask the question why are Algonquian practices of consent, custom, and kinship not already considered forms of political or diplomatic strategy?

Undergraduate readers will appreciate the synthetic nature of the text while scholars can use Schmidt's work as a basis to continue to investigate attitudes toward Natives across the seventeenth century. Given the nature of the author's untimely shooting death in September 2015, we can also honor his passing by teaching our students both his story and the history of Bacon's Rebellion. Violence in all its many different forms has always been and continues to be a critical part of the American story.

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Citation: Hayley Negrin. Review of Schmidt, Ethan A., *The Divided Dominion: Social Conflict and Indian Hatred in*

Early Virginia. H-AmIndian, H-Net Reviews. May, 2016.

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