

European accounts of early contact with Native Americans

The next day there came unto us divers boats, and in one of them the Kings brother, accompanied with forty or fifty men, very handsome and goodly people, and in their behavior as mannerly and civil as any of Europe... he left his boats altogether as the first man did a little from the ships by the shore, and came along to the place over against the ships, followed with forty men. When he came to the place, his servants spread a long mat upon the ground, on which he sate down, and at the other end of the matte four others of his company did the like, the rest of his men stood round about him, somewhat a far off:

- Excerpt from "The first voyage made to the coasts of America, with two barks, where in were captains M. Philip Amadas, and M. Arthur Barlowe, who discovered part of the Country now called Virginia," by one of said captains, 1584. This account of the first voyage of exploration to the Roanoke Island area includes descriptions of the journey, meetings with the local Indian tribes, and the surrounding countryside.

The next day another King of that nation called Kekataugh, having received some kindness of me at the Fort [Jamestown], kindly invited me to a feast at his house, the people from all places flocked to see me, each showing to content me...the great King hath four or five houses, each containing fourscore or an hundred foot in length, pleasantly seated upon an high sandy hill, from whence you may see westerly a goodly low Country, the river before the which his crooked course causeth many great Marshes of exceeding good ground. An hundred houses, and many large plains are here together inhabited. More abundance of fish and fowl, and a pleasanter seat cannot be imagined.

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Arriving at Weramocomoco [? On or about 5 January 1608], their Emperor proudly lying upon a Bedstead a foot high, upon ten or twelve Mattes, richly hung with many chains of great Pearls about his neck, and covered with a great Covering of Rahaughcums. At head sat a woman, at his feet another; on each side sitting upon a Matte upon the ground, were ranged his chief men on each side of the fire, ten in a rank, and behind them as many young women, each a great Chain of white Beads over their shoulders, their heads painted in redo: and with such a grave and Majesticall countenance, as drew me into admiration to see such state in a naked Savage.

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Two in a rank we marched to the Emperors house. Before his house stood forty or fifty great Platters of fine bread. Being entered the house, with loud tunes they all made signs of great joy. This proud savage, having his finest women, and the principal of his chief men assembled, sate in ranks as before is expressed: himself as upon a Throne at the upper end of the house, with such a Majesty as I cannot express, nor yet have often seen, either in Pagan or Christian. With a kind countenance he bade me welcome, and caused a place to be made by himself to sit.

- A selection of John Smith's accounts of his early encounters with the Powhatan around the Chesapeake River region of modern day Virginia.