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THE DIPLOMATIC CAREER OF CANASATEGO

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Looming over the legal and diplomatic struggles of mid-eighteenth-century Euro-Pennsylvanians and Native Americans was the phantom—and occasionally the reality—of Iroquois power. As Pennsylvania officials surveyed what appeared to be chaotic communities of Delawares, Shawnees, and other displaced Native peoples in the Susquehanna and Ohio countries, they sought order in the fiction of Iroquois suzerainty over the multitudes—and feared bloodshed should Iroquois traveling the "warriors' path" southward turn against the province. Meanwhile, both Indians and Euro-Americans on the frontiers could find their aims thwarted, and perhaps even their homes sold out from under them, through deals made over their heads by the proprietors' government and headmen who invoked the name of the Grand Council of the Iroquois League. In these tangled affairs, no name loomed larger during the 1740s than that of the Onondaga headman Canasatego.

He "was a tall, well-made man; had a very full chest, and brawny limbs," said Marylander Witham Marshe, who saw him in action at the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744. "He had a manly countenance, mixed with a good-natured smile," and at "about 60 years of age" remained "very active, strong, and had a surprising liveliness in his speech."[1] Historians, however, have not always been as flattering in their assessments as was

Marshe. In the eyes of some, Canasatego was little more than a purveyor of "braggart falsehoods," a "rum-guzzling windjammer," a "burly, bibulous chief," and a "blowhard."[2] Yet in recent years a revisionist view has emerged, transforming Canasatego into a moralizer in political theory, earnestly lecturing colonial officials on "Iroquois concepts of unity" and delivering up admonitions that "would echo throughout the colonies for over a generation," to be used "not only as a rallying cry against French colonialism but also against British tyranny." The "process of assimilating Iroquois ideas of unity" into the national psyche, and eventually into the Constitution itself, the revisionists say, began with Canasatego.[3] Somewhere in the middle of all this might lie the truth.[4]

Canasatego first appears in the historical record in 1742; his subsequently documented career lasted but eight years. An early translation of his name is "upsetting a house placed in good order," but modern linguistics finds the term unrecognizable.[5] He did not carry any of the known fourteen Onondaga hereditary sachem titles, and so it is unlikely that Canasatego held office as a league chief.[6] Instead, he was probably a speaker, possessing impressive verbal skills and mastery of diplomatic rituals, shrewdness, and personal ambition—qualities that together propelled him into the political arena and made him one of the "chief men" at Onondaga.[7] Little more can be added except to conclude, with ethnohistorian William N. Fenton, that he "dominated politics just then at Onondaga."[8]

Nothing is known of Canasatego's early years. At the peak of his influence, he lived in the village of Sagogsaanagechtheyky, which in 1743 consisted of some forty bark-covered houses scattered along a two- to three-mile stretch of Onondaga Creek in what is now central New York.[9] His "very large and roomy, and well built" home was a short distance from the council house, the center of Onondaga politics.[10] With him resided his wife, a son and daughter, and also a Catawba boy, most likely a war captive.[11] Outside the family dwelling was "a large pole . . . with an English flag on it," a signal of Canasatego's political affection.[12] Zila Woolien (also Zila Woolie, Zillawoolie), a brother, lived in the nearby village of Tiatachtout.[13] A nephew, whose name is not recorded, was killed by colonists just before Canasatego appeared at a 1749 council in Philadelphia.[14]

In the decades before Canasatego came to the notice of Euro-Pennsylvanians, peace had come to the Iroquois only in exchange for European dominance. Changing village life, an economic downturn, and "a diplomacy

increasingly oriented merely toward preserving maneuvering room between powerful surrounding colonies told the tale."[15] Moreover, epidemics continued their devastation. A "contagion," smallpox, ravaged their villages in 1716–17 and again in 1731–32, this time having spread from colonial populations in and around Manhattan and New Jersey.[16] In the fall and winter of 1746–47, Onondaga, where much of Iroquois political business was conducted, fell victim.[17] Along with disease and its inescapable disruptions of village life came its baneful companion, famine. On his first journey to Onondaga in 1737, Conrad Weiser, the interpreter and Indian agent for Pennsylvania, spoke with Indians living in the upper reaches of the Susquehanna Valley who were "so short of provisions now, while twelve years ago they had a greater supply than all the other Indians; and now their children looked like dead persons, and suffered much from hunger."[18] Indians appeared in "such numbers" at a treaty conference at Philadelphia in 1742 that Pennsylvanians could only assume that they were trying "to escape the famine that was sweeping the Indian country."[19] There Canasatego himself reported that the Senecas had "not come down . . . on Account of a famine that raged in their Country, which had reduced them to such Want that a father had been obliged to kill two of his Children to preserve his own and the rest of his family's Lives."[20] Conditions were apparently little better eight years later. After visiting the Senecas in summer 1750, the Moravians John Cammerhoff and David Zeisberger returned to a Cayuga village which they had passed through earlier. They unexpectedly discovered that "the corn had given out, and [the Cayugas] had been compelled to procure much from Onondago, carrying it on their backs, a very troublesome mode of transportation."[21]

Although Cammerhoff and Zeisberger ate well at Onondaga, where there appeared to be no shortage of food, they did have to confront the ruin of alcohol abuse.[22] After a night of heavy drinking, it took all of Canasatego's influence to bring the village council together to discuss the Moravians' several petitions.[23] It had been much worse in the Seneca town of Ganataqueh, where Cammerhoff and Zeisberger witnessed a "drinking bout" that left everyone in "a state of intoxication."[24] At Zonesschio, another Seneca village, the Moravians walked into the middle of a drunken brawl, a harrowing scene filled with "shouting and quarreling" among the Indians, who "all looked mad with drink." "On our way," reported Cammerhoff, "we were everywhere surrounded by drunken savages . . . some of whose faces wore an expression more dreadful than anything we had

ever seen, showing that they had been in this frightful state of intoxication for some days."[25] The situation there deteriorated, and the Moravians were forced to seek a cramped refuge in the loft of one of the houses, "under a shingle roof, on which the sun shone, intensely hot."[26] Two days later, after another miserable night, they managed to slip out of the village while "the drunken savages were in their huts, not a creature to be seen. Even the dogs, numbering nearly 100 in the whole village, were all quiet, wonderful to relate, and not a sound was heard."[27] Poverty was a constant companion to these grim scenes; the Indians' frequent pleas for help signaled their real privation and lent an awful reality to their distress.[28]

The "illusion of power" that the Iroquois, shrewdly and cynically abetted by the English and French, had fostered for decades began to vaporize in the 1730s and 1740s.[29] The Iroquois design to link the Ohio Indians, many of whom were the transplanted Iroquois referred to as Mingos, to the central fire at Onondaga, never succeeded.[30] In 1730 more than one thousand Foxes, Iroquois allies in the west, were trapped by a force of French and Algonquians while fleeing to Seneca villages, with several hundred killed and the rest taken prisoner.[31] In the meantime, the French had pressed farther into Iroquoia with the building of a fort at Crown Point on Lake Champlain, while the English, for their part, began buying up Mohawk land.[32]

Thus the Iroquois found themselves under military and political assault from the north, west, and east, while simultaneously facing unrelenting clashes with such southern Indian foes as the Catawbas. The hardships caused by famine, disease, and drink further complicated matters, all of which encouraged an exodus of people who resettled in the Ohio country.[33] In their weakened condition, those Iroquois who remained in their homelands—excepting the Mohawks—sought to protect their collective flanks by allying themselves with Pennsylvania.[34]

That province was ready for a marriage of convenience. In 1736, Shickellamy, the noted Oneida headman who served ostensibly as the Iroquois' overseer of the Shawnees in Pennsylvania, and Hetaquantegechty, a Seneca, led a large number of canoes filled with more than one hundred Iroquois people and their headmen down the Susquehanna River.[35] The delegation, which significantly included no Mohawks, came to continue business started as early as 1732 when James Logan, the peripatetic Pennsylvania official and de facto superintendent of Indian affairs, along with Weiser and Shickellamy, had launched a new provincial Indian policy that would

"strengthen the hands of the Six Nations, and enable them to be the better answerable for their Tributaries."[36] Reduced to its essentials, this policy guaranteed that the Iroquois "would police Pennsylvania's woods in return for Pennsylvania's recognition of their sole right to do so."[37]

After the treaty council, Weiser accompanied the Indians to Shamokin, where, operating under Logan's instructions, he arranged for the Iroquois to release their claim to lands in the lower Susquehanna Valley, lands to which they actually had no legitimate title. Beyond the presents given to the Indians, what Francis Jennings called the "big bribe," was that the Iroquois received official and exclusive recognition as the lone bargaining agent for Indian lands in Pennsylvania. Not incidentally, they would also exercise supremacy over all of the other Indians there. Knowing that their hand had been strengthened, the Iroquois then petitioned the Pennsylvania authorities to notify Maryland and Virginia that they fully expected compensation, as they put it, "for our Land now in their occupation."[38]

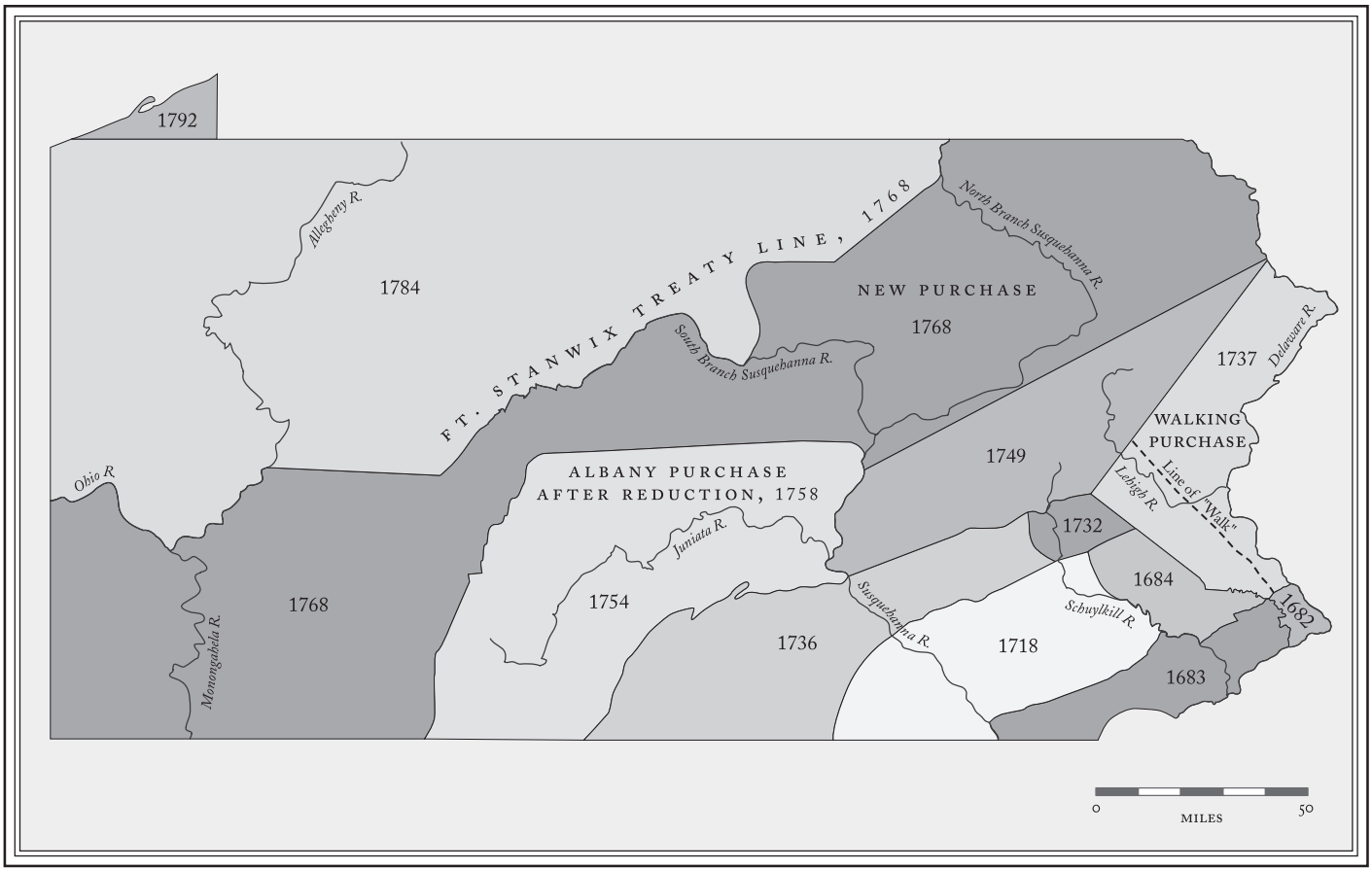
Of equal interest with the consummation of the strategic alliance between the Iroquois and Pennsylvania is the new direction these developments signaled in the internal politics of the Iroquois. Virtually none of the headmen who appeared at the 1736 council, or afterwards at Shamokin, were at all familiar to Weiser or any of the other Pennsylvania officials.[39] Instead, they represented a faction—independent of, and possibly in opposition to, the existing consensus among the Iroquois—that sought a counterbalance to the predominance of New France and New York in the Iroquois' economic and diplomatic life.[40]

Though Canasatego was not on the list of participants at the 1736 meeting, it is likely that he was in attendance.[41] He was certainly present when an Iroquois delegation returned to Philadelphia in July 1742 to receive the remainder of their compensation for releasing the Susquehanna lands.[42] Identified on this occasion for the first time as the Onondagas' speaker,[43] he opened the conference with an account of how some of their "Young men" had, without authority, sold "two Plantations on the River Cohongoronta" to "Some white People." Skillfully employing the story as an allegory, he reminded Governor George Thomas that the Iroquois had not forgotten the 1736 agreement obligating them "to sell none of the Land that falls within the Province of Pennsylvania to any but our brother Onas, and that to sell Lands to any other is an high Breach of the League of friendship."[44]

The phrase "within the Province of Pennsylvania" was significant in

light of the fact that the 1736 agreement had preceded Pennsylvania's infamous Walking Purchase. In the early 1730s, two of the three Penn brothers—John and Thomas—produced what they claimed to be an old deed as authority to appropriate the lands of the Lehigh Valley Delawares, which had been purchased in 1700 by their father William. The terms of that sale set forth the tract's northward extent as the distance a man could walk in a day and a half, following the course of the river. The walk, however, was never completed; at a point along the way, a dispute had arisen about whether the river should be crossed at the Indian settlement at Tohiccon, breaking off the whole affair. Three decades later, the Penns demanded that the interrupted walk of 1700 again be undertaken. Pressed by the Penn brothers, and also by several of the Iroquois nations, the Delaware leadership reluctantly withdrew its opposition and signed a purported deed in August 1737. Less than one month later the second walk took place. Hired runners struck out on a path that had previously been cleared (and thoroughly reconnoitered) at a pace that left their Indian witnesses struggling to keep up, covering a distance of some sixty miles in the time allotted. Moreover, the runners did not follow the winding course of the river, as the original agreement had stipulated, but instead walked a straight path and then drew a right-angle line, parallel to the river, from the most distant point. From there it was a four-day trek back to the river. Through this trickery, the Penns were able to lay claim to all of the territory between the Delaware and Lehigh rivers, lands that many of the Delawares would refuse to abandon.[45]

In 1742, then, Canasatego and the Iroquois were in a position to do far more than merely collect what had been pledged on the eve of the Walking Purchase in 1736, for Pennsylvania needed them to deal with the recalcitrant Delawares. After Governor Thomas had presented the goods promised in 1736—45 guns; 500 pounds of powder; 600 pounds of lead; 100 blankets; 100 shirts, shoes, stockings; iron tools; tobacco and tobacco pipes; and 25 gallons of rum—Canasatego was confident he could extract more. "It is true we have the full Quantity according to Agreement, but if the Proprietor had been here himself, we think in regard to our Numbers and poverty, he would have made an Addition to them," he announced. "We therefore desire, if you have the Keys of the Proprietor's Chest, you will open it and take out a little more for us." The Iroquois fully understood, Canasatego said, that their "Lands are now become more Valuable; the white People think we don't know their Value, but we are sensible that the



Map 4 Six Nations Iroquois land cessions to Pennsylvania, 1736–92. Claims of other Native nations excluded; revised from Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania,* rev. ed. (Harrisburg: PHMC, 1981), 137.

Land is Everlasting, and the few Goods we receive for it are soon Worn out and Gone."[46] Calling attention to the fact that Euro-Americans had settled in territory north of the area released in 1736 for which the Iroquois had "never received any Consideration," he demanded additional payment. The governor gave the appearance of raising a number of objections but in the end delivered goods to the tune of at least £300.[47]

Governor Thomas may not have anticipated Canasatego's importunity, but he had decided before the meeting to test the resolve of his new-found friends and the new policy of inflating Iroquois hegemony over the varied Indian communities with which Pennsylvania had to deal. Taking his turn before the council, Thomas raised the issue of the Delawares and a "disturbance about the Lands the Proprietor purchased from them" that they had provoked with "insolence . . . [and] utmost Rudeness and ill Manners."[48] "As you on all Occasions apply to Us to remove all White people that are settled on Lands before they are purchased from You, and we do our Endeavours to turn such People Off," he continued, "We now expect from You that you will cause these Indians to remove from the Lands in the forks of Delaware, and not give any further Disturbance to the Persons who are now in Possession."[49] Outmaneuvered by the governor and bound by the new Iroquois-Pennsylvanian alliance, Canasatego was trapped. Thomas had responded favorably, if perhaps with feigned reticence, to Canasatego's request for more presents. As a consequence, Canasatego found himself burdened with an obligation. But more important, the Iroquois were compelled to exact obedience of their tributaries over whom they had been assigned authority by the 1732 and 1736 agreements.

Two full days went by before Canasatego rose in council to reply to the governor's challenge. And when he did, he pulled out all the stops. Agreeing with the governor that the Delawares had "been a very unruly People, and . . . altogether in the wrong in their Dealings," he turned to the Delawares and their headman Nutimus, who had been a party to both the original Walking Purchase of 1700 and that of 1737.[50] "Let this Belt of Wampum serve to Chastize You," Canasatego thundered. "You ought to be taken by the Hair of the Head and shak'd severely till you recover your Senses and become Sober; you don't know what Ground you stand on, nor what you are doing. . . . We conquer'd You, we made Women of you, you know you are Women, and can no more sell Land than Women. . . . This Land that you Claim is gone through Your Guts. You have been furnished with Cloaths and Meat and Drink . . . and now You want it again

like Children you are. . . . This String of Wampum serves to forbid You . . . for ever medling in Land Affairs."[51] Canasatego ordered the Delawares to move to either Wyoming, on the Susquehanna's north branch, or to Shamokin. "We don't give you the liberty to think about it," he concluded. "Take the Advice of a Wise Man and remove immediately."[52]

Despite the force of his rhetoric, a closer examination reveals that Canasatego, without a blink, had entirely submitted to the governor. He had no choice and could save face only by holding forth in what Jennings called unfettered "rodomontade."[53] Canasatego's take-charge stance, however, bolstered the Iroquois' pretense of hegemony over its their "tributaries" and kept the Delawares within the fold and away from the French. It also gave the Iroquois desperately needed maneuvering room between the competing French and English colonial powers who, as almost everyone knew, were about to enter into a war.[54] Canasatego's other intention, however, was to secure the good graces of the Pennsylvania governor. By doing so, he hoped to keep the "road" between the Iroquois he represented and the Pennsylvanians "clear and free" of "obstructions" and "incumbrances."[55] It was on this path, after all, that he wanted European goods to continue to flow, goods that would be a hedge against the difficult times his people were enduring. It was also on this road that Iroquois warriors could travel unimpeded against their erstwhile enemies, the Catawbas.

In summer 1743, Weiser, accompanied by John Bartram, the botanist, and Louis Evans, a mapmaker, traveled north from Pennsylvania to resolve a serious matter with the Iroquois.[56] The previous winter a party of mostly Onondaga warriors on their way to raid the Catawbas had been attacked by Virginians. Several were slain, and the Iroquois vowed revenge. Aware of the danger to its exposed frontier settlements, Virginia immediately sought to defuse the situation, asking Pennsylvania to have Weiser act as a mediator. Not wanting to be drawn into a wider conflict that might involve the fractious and unpredictable Shawnees, Pennsylvania obliged, and so did Weiser.[57]

Upon reaching Onondaga, the Pennsylvanians were escorted to their quarters. "After we had eat some dry'd Eels boild in Hominy, and some Matts had been spread for Us to lye upon, Canassatego and Caheshcarowanoto, of the Chiefs, with several more, came to see Us and receiv'd Us very kindly," Weiser reported. The visitors and their hosts "smoak'd a Pipe of Philadelphia Tobacco together, and had some further discourse on things

of no Consequence."[58] There is no record of any interaction between Canasatego and Weiser following the 1742 treaty, but enough trust had grown between them to embolden Weiser to invite the Onondaga to meet him "in the Bushes to have a private Discourse" on those consequential things they could not discuss publicly. "We met a little way distant from the Town," Weiser recalled. "I brought with me my Instructions and the Wampum I had, and told him that as he was our Particular friend and well acquainted both with Indians and white People's Affairs and Customs, I would tell him all my Business, and beg his Advice how to speak to everything when the Council should be met. He assured me of his good will and Affection to the Governor of Pensilvania and all his People, and that he would do for me what lay in his power."[59] Canasatego took this message to the Onondaga headmen who later in the day summoned Weiser to meet with them. Tocanuntie ("otherwise call'd the black Prince of Onondago")[60] gave Weiser the advice he sought and also mentioned that the Pennsylvanian had "done very well and prudent to inform the Onondagoes . . . before the rest of the Counsellors." Because most of the members of the raiding party killed by the Catawbas had been Onondagas, that nation would "altogether be left . . . by the Council of the United Nations to answer."[61]

Armed with this advice, Weiser, representing Virginia, asked Canasatego to speak for him "in Open Council." When the meeting opened, the dead Onondagas were condoled (among them was Shickellamy's cousin), and £100 sterling in goods provided by Virginia's lieutenant governor, William Gooch, were distributed to the mourning families and the "Publick Council."[62] Then "the Chain of friendship" between the Iroquois and Virginia was mended and assurances made so that both the colony's "back Inhabitants" and any Iroquois warriors passing by them on their way to the Catawbas would be of "good behavior." Lastly, the alliance between the Iroquois and Pennsylvania was reaffirmed.[63]

When that alliance was next confirmed, in the treaty at Lancaster in 1744, additional evidence emerged on how Canasatego maintained his position as an Onondaga headman and speaker for the Iroquois. The council brought together the Iroquois—again with no Mohawk participation—and government officials from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Its purpose was to resolve the land claims the Iroquois had made against the Chesapeake provinces in the treaty of 1736 and to inform the Iroquois of the start of what British colonists would call King George's War.[64] Pennsyl-

vania's Governor Thomas had instructed the commissioners of Virginia and Maryland about the significance of this meeting. The Iroquois, positioned on "a Frontier" with some of the colonies, would be, "If Friends, . . . Capable of Defending their Settlements; If Enemies, of making Cruel Ravages upon them; If Neuters, they may deny the French a Passage through their Country, and give us timely Notice of their Designs. These are but some of the Motives for cultivating a good Understanding with them."[65]

Maryland had called the conference; therefore, Iroquois protocol dictated that its commissioner speak first. He began by disputing the Iroquois territorial claim, arguing that there was "little reason to complain of any Injury from Maryland." If by making such a claim the Iroquois "designed to Terrify" Marylanders, they should think again, for the provincials, who were "numerous, courageous, and have arms ready in their Hands, will not suffer themselves to be hurt in their Lives and Estates" that they had possessed "above One hundred Years." Nevertheless, he was there to listen to whatever grounds there were for the claim, and if any had merit, to "make them some reasonable Compensation for it."[66]

The next day, Canasatego replied with a lengthy history lesson, combined with a bit of knucklerapping:

> When you mentioned the affair of the Land Yesterday, you went back to old Times, and told us you had been in posession of the Province of Maryland above One hundred Years; but what is one hundred years in comparison to the length of Time since our Claim began?—Since we came out of this Ground? For we must tell you that long before One hundred years Our ancestors came out of this very Ground, and their Children have remained here ever since. You came out of the Ground in a Country that lyes beyond Seas, there you may have a just Claim, but here you must allow Us to be your elder Brethren, and the Lands to belong to us long before you know anything of them.[67]

As Jennings wryly observed, Canasatego's monologue was "the only known occasion upon which the Iroquois claimed ancestors in Maryland."[68] Nonetheless, it firmly set the tone for the conference, for all appearances placing the colonies in the awkward position of having to pay substantial sums for a claim they knew was bogus. "Altho' we cannot admit your

Right," Maryland complained, it nevertheless put up £300 in Pennsylvania currency, partially in goods. Pennsylvania added another £300. Virginia was especially brusque as it laid out £200 in goods and another £300 in gold: "As we have already sayd enough to you on the Subject of the Title to the Lands you Claim from Virginia, we have no occasion to say any thing more to you on that head, but come directly to the Point. We have open'd the Chests, and the Goods are now here before you."[69]

The Old Dominion, however, would have the last laugh. Canasatego, for all of his skills at discourse and negotiation, apparently did not fully grasp the significance of the conference much beyond its gifts and gold and the renewed recognition of the Iroquois' ostensible hegemony over Pennsylvania's Indians. Blinded by his perceived victory, he seems not to have examined, or understood, the record of what he had agreed to. He and the other Iroquois headmen believed that they had ceded only the Shenandoah Valley to Virginia. Yet the deed's language far more expansively "renounce[d] and disclaim[ed] not only all the right of the said six nations, but also recognize[d] the right and title of our sovereign the King of Great Britain to all the lands within the said colony [of Virginia] as it is now or hereafter may be peopled and bounded by his said Majesty . . . his heirs and successors." According to Virginia's royal charter, those lands within its boundaries extended all the way to the Pacific. By the following April, the Williamsburg government had granted petitions for some 300,000 acres of western real estate.[70]

In June 1745, Canasatego, with several other headmen, again welcomed Weiser and his party to Onondaga. Weiser had instructions from the governor of Pennsylvania, acting on a request from Virginia's Gooch, to arrange a peace between the Iroquois and the Catawbas. His visit was timed perfectly as the Onondagas, along with delegations of other Iroquois, were preparing to travel to Canada at the invitation of the French governor.[71] Meeting in council, representatives of the Iroquois, again with no Mohawks participating, deferred any decision to attend a treaty with the Catawbas until the diplomats returned from Canada. They also assured Weiser that they knew "the French Governor . . . will try to gain upon us, but it will be in vain for him, as we have already agreed what to say to him and will not go from it."[72] Still, Weiser reminded the Iroquois of promises they had made at Lancaster at least to maintain neutrality in the imperial war.[73]

Canasatego did not accompany his fellow Onondaga headmen to Canada. According to Weiser, he had "staid at home to meet the Governour of New-York in Albany (as they said) some time this Fall."[74] Canasatego, however, was at Onondaga to greet the Moravian bishop Augustus Spangenberg upon his return from Oswego, from whence the Iroquois delegates had departed for Montreal.[75] There is no reason to doubt Weiser's assessment of why the Onondaga headman did not go to Oswego and then to Canada. Canasatego's strongly pro-English sentiments might also have influenced him to stay put. Whatever the case, he acted as the chief speaker at the upcoming Albany conference, conveying in detail to the assembled Indians and colonial officials what had gone on in Montreal.[76]

The October 1745 meeting in Albany brought together an array of government officials from New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, and a contingent of more than 460 Iroquois, among them between 40 and 50 headmen, this time including Mohawks, but no Senecas. A number of Mahicans also participated.[77] The council was called ostensibly to determine the source of a rumor, circulated the previous winter, that the citizens of Albany were about to attack the Mohawks.[78] For the Iroquois, the meeting could not have come at a more inopportune time: they were in the midst of debating the peace overtures of the Catawbas; they were facing problems with the Shawnees in the west, who were slipping from their political grasp and sidling up to the French; and they needed to consider the report of their deputies recently returned from Canada.[79] Nevertheless, the council proceeded. "I saw Canassatego and the rest of my old friends today," Weiser, who attended the Albany conference in his capacity as interpreter for the Pennsylvania commissioners, reported on his arrival.[80] At the council, Canasatego and the Mohawk headman Hendrick were the Iroquois speakers. Governor George Clinton of New York, who had called the gathering, set an agenda that went beyond squelching the "rumor," the significance of which was fast diminishing. First, Clinton wanted a full report from the Iroquois on their wartime dealings with the French governor. Second, suspecting that overtures had been made by the French, he wanted to impress the Iroquois with "the power of the united English colonies."[81]

Canasatego obliged the governor, furnishing him with a detailed account of what had happened in Montreal. He repeated the Iroquois' pledge to remain neutral "unless the French should come through our Settlements to hurt our Brethren the English, which we would not permit."[82] Earlier,

when pressed by Clinton to take up the hatchet against the French in King George's War, Canasatego had promised only to keep it "in our Bosom," out of sight of both the French and the Iroquois' Indian allies. Although the Iroquois refused to commit themselves, Canasatego and several other Onondaga headmen were deeply concerned about New York's and New England's insistence that they enter the fray.[83] And they wondered why Pennsylvania had not been present at the council session to hear Clinton's request to take up the hatchet. Weiser recorded what the Onondaga headmen had confided to him in a private meeting about how "the Warr between the French and English had formerly Eat up all their People that had too rashly engaged in it without any Cause, and that the White People daily increasing saved themselves and the Indians decreased." In the future, the Indians vowed, they would "be more careful before they destroy'd one another again."[84]

Canasatego and other Onondaga headmen saw through the pretext of any "union" that was said to prevail among the British colonies. They also recognized the very real military, political, and economic dangers this lack of unity posed to their people. Fearing the abilities of the French to draw the neutral Iroquois to their support, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts sought unsuccessfully to commit them to a declaration for the English. Pennsylvania was against any engagement of the Indians whatever.[85] As he had at Lancaster, Canasatego urged the English to put aside their differences and formulate a single policy in their dealings with the French and, as important, with the Iroquois: "You our Brethren should be all united in your Councils, and let this Belt of Wampum serve to bind you all together; and if any thing of Importance is to be communicated to us by any of you, this is the place where it should be done."[86] Canasatego knew full well what the outcome for his people would be if the English were not of "Good Agreement" or unable to keep the French at bay.[87] He did not mention the ever-widening divisions in Iroquois communities and what they might portend, that the risks for the Iroquois would only increase if factionalism continued. He seems to have remained much less prescient about the future of the Confederacy than he was of English-French relations.

Canasatego attended his last recorded treaty conference in August 1749, one year after King George's War ended. Pennsylvania hoped to purchase additional Iroquois lands west of the Susquehanna, where, as subsequent

chapters in this volume will show, unauthorized settlement by Euro-American squatters was becoming a major irritant to Native peoples and the proprietary government alike. Weiser had urged proprietary officials to refrain from using open force against the squatters until after the treaty, "when all proper means ought to be used to make a purchase from [the Iroquois] . . . for some part of that land between the Kititany or Endless mountains and alleghiny Hill," including "all the Lands on the Waters of Juniata."[88] The plan was for the arriving Iroquois delegations to rendezvous north of Philadelphia and to proceed from there. But the Senecas, traveling alone, went on ahead. They met with the governor in the city and were given a message to take to the Iroquois council at Onondaga, "to know if they wou'd sell any and what Lands to the Proprietors."[89]

More than a month later, leading "a mob of 279 hungry Indians"—among them Tutelos, Nanticokes, and Delawares, as well as Iroquois—Canasatego appeared at Weiser's farm in Tulpehocken, expecting to treat again with the Pennsylvanians. Weiser was in a panic over how he would feed and shelter so many people, and he let Canasatego know of his displeasure from the start. Instead of greeting his old friend with a handshake, he stood silently for several long minutes, publicly displaying his anger.[90] He told the headman that he and his people had no business in Philadelphia other than to get drunk. Furthermore, they could anticipate no presents from the proprietors and could not expect to be fed—food cost money.[91] Unchastened by Weiser's diatribe, Canasatego waited until the next day to respond. He chided his friend, reminding him that colonists had always been invited to "take Share with us be it no thing or Some thing and we have allways done So." Iroquois expected the same kind of hospitality "when we went to philadelphia and never have been reprimanded for it after this manner." If they were no longer welcome in the Pennsylvania capital, "perhaps it is because you got all our lands that you wanted from us and you dont like to See us any more and Consequently our fate is the Same as our Cousins the delawares and Mohickans."[92] Still, Canasatego offered Weiser an escape from this reproach, asking whether his message of the previous day was his own or on the instructions of "our Brethren in philadelphia." Recognizing that his loss of temper had insulted Canasatego and could cause irreparable damage to any further negotiations for land, Weiser responded that he had only meant to offer advice. If the Iroquois took it, "well and good," and "If not it was well and good again as to what belong to me."[93]

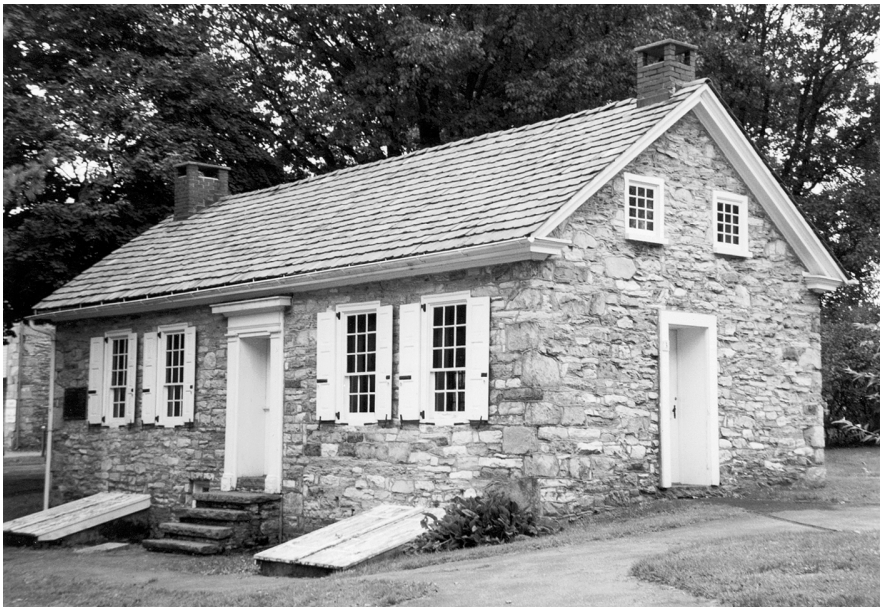


Figure 9 Conrad Weiser Homestead, Womelsdorf, Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.

Weiser escorted the delegation to Philadelphia. During the proceedings there, Canasatego expressed his dismay at the number of Euro-American squatters who had taken up lands on the Susquehanna's eastern bank beyond the Blue Mountain. On their way to Philadelphia, they had seen "papers which were Interpreted to us to be Orders for these People to Remove," yet "Notwithstanding your Engagements," he complained to Governor James Hamilton, "many People have settled on the East side of Sasquehanna, and though you may have done your Endeavours to remove them, yet we see these have been without Effect."[94] In response, Hamilton tried to shift responsibility for the encroachments to Indian residents of the Susquehanna and Juniata valleys who sometimes cut individual deals with squatters, allowing them to remain (as discussed in Chapter 10, below). "We shall not find it difficult effectually to remove all these Intruders if some of your Indians do not give them Countenance," Hamilton asserted, but "if we turn the People off you must not defend them nor invite them there again." In what Provincial Secretary Richard Peters called "an Expedient to quiet them," the governor tried to purchase the entire

Juniata River valley from the Iroquois. Canasatego, however, agreed to sell only a small parcel of land on the east side of the Susquehanna; in a process becoming painfully familiar on the proprietors' maps, this somehow became a huge swath of territory between the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers between the borders of the Walking Purchase and the Wyoming Valley.[95]

Thus at Philadelphia in 1749, Canasatego again managed to parlay a limited sale of lands to which the Iroquois held only tenuous claim into material advantage for his people. What is equally significant, however, is the Onondaga's recognition of just how badly the Iroquois had fared while trying to maneuver between the two competing European powers. In his opening speech, he had metaphorically brightened the "Chain of Friendship" between the Iroquois and Pennsylvania, declaring that "notwithstanding all that has happen'd, we are not chang'd in our Regards for you but continue to be the same still to the People of this Province as ever."[96] He then reminded the Pennsylvanians that the Iroquois were "a frontier Country between your Enemy and You, so that we have been your Guard, and things have been manag'd so well as to keep the War from your Doors, and tho' we have been expos'd to many Calamities and Blood has been shed among us, yet we did not trouble you with any account of our hardship during all this War, nor has any thing that has happen'd lessen'd our Affection for you, which we assure you of by this Belt, and desire the same return of Affection from You."[97] It would be easy to conclude that Canasatego's speech was preparatory to one more attempt to shake down Pennsylvania. After all, King George's War had not involved the Iroquois to any great degree. Yet after many years of only limited Iroquois success in dealing with the English and French, he must have come to the realization of just how dangerous the Iroquois' position as a "frontier Country" was.

But Canasatego's own position was even more dangerous; within a year he would be assassinated. The last non-Indians to report seeing him alive were Cammerhoff and Zeisberger during their visit to Onondaga in June 1750. On their arrival, they were escorted to the council house where they saw "a goodly assembly of important people sitting around their fire, Ganassateco in the midst of them. . . . He knew at once who we were, called us by name, and seemed very much pleased to see us. He began to laugh for joy, in his peculiar manner, and one felt and saw that we were welcome guests."[98] After a brief meeting, Canasatego and his visitors returned to his

house. "He came to our fire, and appeared so pleased to be able to entertain us, that he scarcely knew how to express his joy," the Moravians recalled, imagining themselves to be "at a great court, where all the affairs of state are concentrated." Canasatego was engaging, asking about old friends, the news from Philadelphia, and how the journey had gone. "He told us that he had much to do, and many matters to arrange."[99] Two days later, a Sunday, the Moravians arose and were treated to "a bountiful meal" during which "Ganassateco's manner was very kind and cheerful." Later in the morning he showed them a Catawba's scalp, "skillfully painted and tied to a stick. . . . It was the subject of a long discourse." Shortly thereafter, Zeisberger suggested to Canasatego that he and Cammerhoff meet with him privately, "so that we might give him a clear idea of our wishes, and that he might then propose them to the Council for us, as we were not perfectly familiar with their language and customs."[100]

On 6 September 1750, Weiser and Daniel Claus, the protégé of Sir William Johnson, arrived at Onondaga to find "the Indians in great Mourning and Grief on account of their Head Sachem Canaghsadigo being dead a few days before by Poison which was suspected to have been conveyed into his Victuals by some french Emissaries that then resided at Onandaga Lake under the Disguise of Traders."[101] In the day journal he kept while at Onondaga, Weiser was somewhat more circumspect. "Since this CH [Cammerhoff] was in the Sinniken [Seneca] Country and told the Indians there that he had bought land from Canasago at onontago and paid him with silver truk. This last article I dont belief but it is Currantly reported at onontago and by private Intelligence I had it was the occassion of Canasategos death."[102]

Canasatego's successor was Tohaswuchdioony, "a proffessed Roman Catholick, and altogether devoted to the French."[103] He offered Weiser his own version of what had happened "in the bushes" between the Moravians and Canasatego. The old man, he said, had been bribed "with large presents" to sell land to the Moravians. Questioned later by some of the Iroquois headmen in Canasatego's absence, Cammerhoff admitted giving gifts, adding, however, that they were "for Canasatego to divide among the Indians as he pleased."[104] After the headmen admonished him "for not diliver[ing] this things in open Counsel," Cammerhoff went on to warn the Indians "not to let the white people settle to much of their land which would make the Indians poor and ruin the trade."[105]

Cammerhoff told a different story. He and Zeisberger had gone to

Onondaga and solicited Canasatego's assistance for three reasons: to request permission from the Iroquois council to send two of their brethren to Onondaga to learn the Indians' language; to send a blacksmith to the Nanticokes and Shawnees; and to visit the Seneca villages.[106] There is no reference in his journal to any attempt to purchase land. On the contrary, he announced to Canasatego, among other things, that the Moravians "were no traders, and did not come to them [the Iroquois] from love of gain, or desire to seize or buy their lands."[107] Cammerhoff wrote that he did give Canasatego gifts, but "in the presence of two other headmen, Kagokaga and Gashekoa, [and] told him that these were presents sent by our Brethren to the Council in Onondaga. . . . He asked us whether they were intended for all, and when we replied, 'For all the chiefs,' he accepted them."[108] At no point did Cammerhoff say that he was questioned by the headmen. Indeed, he frequently commented on how well he and Zeisberger were treated throughout their stay in the Onondaga village.

Tohaswuchdioony may have been aware that Weiser and Cammerhoff had not always seen eye-to-eye, or had decided to plant his own seeds of doubt for the purpose of making his story more believable.[109] Whatever the case, he told Weiser that Cammerhoff was questioned about why Weiser himself had not come with the Moravians' petition. According to Tohaswuchdioony, the answer was that Weiser "is of another sort of people and no more in favour and after our people that will learn to speak your language Come back he will have nothing more to do with Indians affairs."[110] All indications are, however, that Canasatego may have been assassinated, not for taking a bribe to sell land, but because he was an obstacle to the designs of the pro-French faction at Onondaga.[111] Tohaswuchdioony provides the key. Weiser reported that he "was told by Tahashronchdioony the Chief, that all the Belts of Wampum belonging to the Publick from the several English Governors that remained unanswered at the Death of Canassatego, and found in his Possession, were by his orders burned [buried] with him. This the said Chief said to make Canassatogo a Thief after his death; some imagine that his Widow and Family stole them."[112] As Jennings observed, "this yarn is simply not credible." When the Onondagas buried the wampum, they "ended the obligations implied by the belts without having to come back to the colonials in a hostile posture. A new start would have to be made," even though not all of Canasatego's policies would be abandoned.[113]

As a senior member of the old guard, Canasatego was politically vulner-

able and increasingly isolated. Several of his allies in the pursuit of the Pennsylvania strategy were dead, including Shickellamy and also his fellow Onondaga headmen, Caxhayion, Solkiwanachty, and Toganiha.[114] Canasatego's failure to obtain anything of substance at Philadelphia in 1749—politically or materially—may have contributed to the success of the French-leaning Indians at Onondaga. At a council held there on 14 September 1750, Conrad Weiser stood by as "the speaker gave a string of Wampum of nine rows, and gave another of the same seiz, with a Belt of Wampum to Coffer the grave of Canasatego."[115]

That Canasatego's recorded career as a headman was but a brief eight years may be an artifact of the surviving documents. Others certainly left a much longer trail in Euro-American archives. Yet his brief efflorescence may actually reflect the battering that Native leaders and their people had to endure during what was, to say the least, a troublesome and often desperate era. Upholding that smoke-and-mirrors phantasm, the "Iroquois mystique," became a burden that no one could continue to shoulder. To try and walk the increasingly thin diplomatic line between competing and often hostile European sovereigns, while at the same time dealing with Indian foes, was no easy task. And in the face of disease and famine, that timeworn axiom, "if you feed, you lead," must have loomed large in the minds of many Native headmen and their followers. Canasatego was one of several Iroquois leaders who sought to meet these challenges; others would continue on this path through to the dark days of the Revolution, less than three decades away. The extent to which he succeeded is remarkable. But as events unfolded around him, Canasatego may have wished that he had been born at another time.