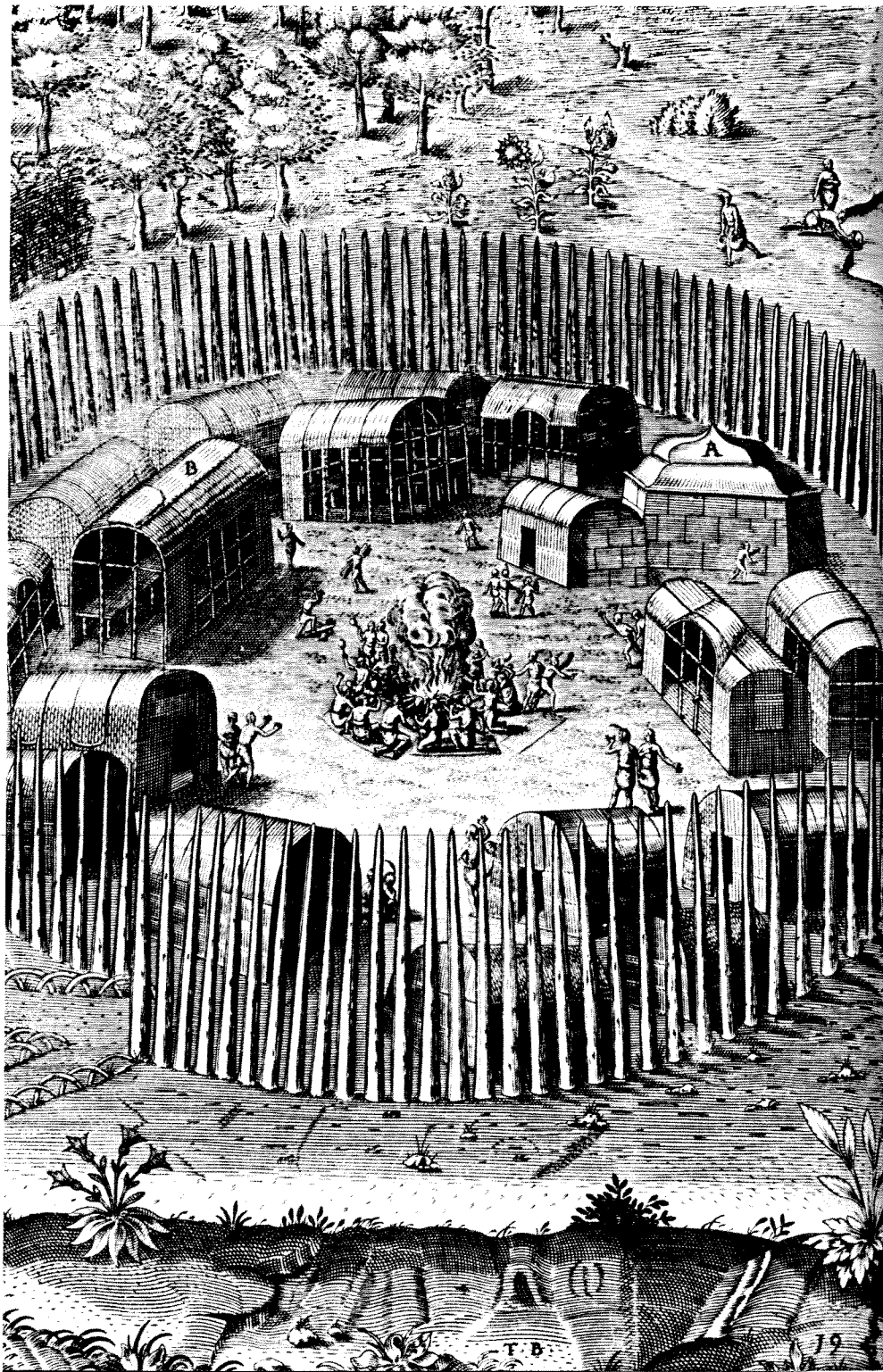

THE SETTING AND THE ACTION

The people who lived beside it, deriving sustenance, called it Chesapeok—the mother of waters. They fished and they hunted, thinning the forest with the fires that drove the game toward the waiting line of men. The women

cleared garden patches to plant corn, beans, and various gourd crops. All lived in small bands, often fiercely at war with one another—their lives and forms of self-esteem very closely bound up with readiness for such warfare.



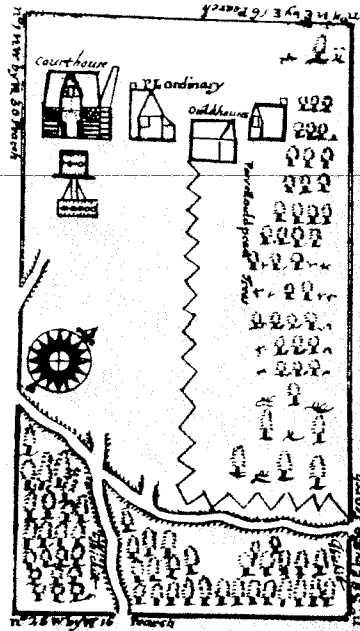


Then came the navigators who called themselves English. With the aid of charts, they brought their ships over in what by their calendar was the year of the Lord 1607. They made Chesapeake into a bay upon a map of a land they had called Virginia. They claimed to possess it all in the name of their king. The waters of Powhatan and Pamaunk became the rivers James and York. Rappahannock and Potomac kept ancient names, but they too became entries upon the map.

The English lodged among the earlier inhabitants and kept themselves alive only with the help of those peoples—until they discovered that they could grow rich, as they accounted wealth, by planting and harvesting a drug plant, the sot-weed, tobacco. Then commenced more than two centuries of conscripting labor to make the crop. The marking of maps upon the ground soon began in earnest as surveys divided the land into properties.



At first the English huddled together in wattle-and-daub huts behind tall palisades, but as the original inhabitants were driven back by the newcomers and killed off by imported diseases, strong liquors, and broken hearts, the invaders boldly set up homes in the midst of the territories they had staked out. They brought nails across the seas, and making use of an abundance of timber unknown for centuries in the island from which they had come, they learned to frame, wall, and roof "Virginia houses" of beams and boards. Boundaries enclosed boundaries, according to notions of the fitness of things that they had also brought with them. Thus counties and parishes were laid out. Courthouses and churches arose, put together at first from materials hewn from the forest.



Some of the English, being owners of land and lords of labor, consolidated an eminence above the rest. When, after a time, they found there was a shortage of their own island people who were willing to enter into bondage for a term

of years in order to be carried to a continent of supposed opportunity, the would-be masters supplied themselves with captives from Africa instead. Thus another people came to live and work on the Chesapeake shores.

